

THE RAMAYANA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL OF VALMIKI

A modernised version in English
THREE VOLUMES BOUND IN ONE

MAKHAN LAL SEN

TRIPRA KATA PURI, DARGA, HOWRAH,
CALCUTTA

1941

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the whole of Ramayana as a grand allegorical poem, depicting progress of Aryan cultivation and civilisation into the Deccan. There is indeed something fascinating about these interpretations, as in the seductive Dawn myth of Prof. Max Muller, in explaining away many mysterious Vedic phenomena. Yet to treat the whole of Ramayana as an agricultural poem is nothing but blasphemy pure and simple. To rely upon the derivative roots of Rama and Sita and to brush aside everything else is neither judicious nor sound.

The historical basis and the great antiquity of the Ramayana have more than amply been proved. It is too late now to attempt to establish the fact over again. The historic remains of Ramchandra's time are the strongest proofs of its historical truth. No amount of theory can get over this. A simple tour from Ayodhya to Rameswaram will settle all doubts. Yet if any formal authority of history is needed, we can do no better than refer to Col. Todd's immortal Annals of Rajasthan dealing with men sprung from Ramchandra's loins. It is ridiculous to contend any more about its historical basis, though "the outline is entirely lost in colour."

Still we maintain that to study our ancient institutions we must look more to our Epics and Puranas than merely relying on foreign accounts, as, Hiuen Tsang's Travels, or McCrindel's "India as described by Classical Authors." They are helpful no doubt but do not go to the roots. Here is enough food for patient research. In the Ramayana itself we find a high order of civilisation existing side by side with some strange practices and customs, some of which are quite Vedic, while the rest is of

doubtful origin. There are also other things that will ever perplex a questioning reader, *e.g.* :

Who are the Rakshasas ? Some say, they are Non-Aryans (a vague term by itself) or the dark primitive people of India whom the white Hindus conquered. They were savage people. But the civilisation and prosperity that we find in Lanka, the capital of the Rakshasas' chief, could not only vie with that of Ayodhya, but in some points were even superior to that of the Aryan capital. How can we then reconcile these two contradictory things ? Have all the hedious practices been attributed to them out of sheer prejudice or malice, because they represented a different type of civilisation ? But Ravana worshipped the Aryan God Siva and followed the same faith !

Secondly, who are the Vanaras ? Some say, they are anthropoid apes ; while others, more scientific, are of opinion that they are Darwin's missing link, while the third maintains, that they were the aborigines of the Deccan. That they were not monkeys is quite evident. They had their kingdoms, and other civil institutions, yet some ape-like tricks and other arboreal habits have been freely attributed to them ! But the devotion, loyalty, intelligence, love of truth, high sense of morality and skill they exhibit are rare not only in apes or missing link, but even in our present civilised age. Thus every theory which we so readily pounce upon appears to be negated by some incontrovertible facts !

Thirdly, the occult power, we find, shared by some ascetics and Brahmanas is astounding, but the metamorphic power of their curses is simply astonishing. Even

some material objects surpass our power of comprehension. Some of the arms and weapons described in the Epic and the description of the Puspaka that steers through the sky like a modern aeroplane, appear to be quite perplexing. What are they? Are these the mere fabrications of a hyper-sensitive eastern mind (yet where flourished Vedantas and the Upanishads) or there is some sub-stratum of truth underneath them ("where more is meant than meets the ear") is more than what we can say.

As for the great antiquity of the poem : we can only repeat what Prof. Jacobi has said, "The inner kernel of the Ramayana was composed much earlier than the Mahabharata, though the former has subsequently been modified by some later poets."

Nay more, it had, from time immemorial, invited many literary intruders to come with their countryside tales and weave them into the main texture of the poem,—a fact which has rendered the original an arduous reading to most of the modern readers. And the Ramayana, too, like most of the classics is now more admired than read. Yet we hope that, [like the Illiad in ancient Greece, the Ramayana should be found under the pillow of every patriotic Hindu who still feels pride for the glorious achievements of his illustrious ancestors.

This has rendered the painful necessity of applying our irreverent scissors in pruning down literary prolixity and mere verbosity in many places, where it has encroached upon the main narrative, or clouded the real issue, or rendered the whole piece a tedious reading. This is an audacity, we admit, but considering modern taste and

multifarious demands that are incessantly made upon the time of a modern reader, we have ventured to expunge all verbosity and unnecessary details for which most of the modern readers have little taste, or find little time or energy to feel their way through a regular forest of literary brambles. Economy is looked for in every department of life,—even in reading, since he has now so many things to read. And herein lies our justification for the present publication of the Epic.

This, of course, in no way means any disrespect to the great poet. Time has adorned the stately mansion with wall-flowers and other blossoms (the lovely evidence of its hoary age) and the tributes of unknown poets that have swelled the mighty current of Valmiki's poetry. Now, to dilate upon the merits of the Ramayana would be, in the words of Shakespeare, as useless as "to gild the refined gold or to paint the lily." Yet to a modern reader many things might appear quite absurd and dull. He may even be shocked by excessive hyperboles and supernatural elements of the Epic. But certain allowances must be made for its hoary age and the state of belief that characterised the society of that time. Literature of every age is tinged by its atmosphere. The Ramayana, too, was coloured by its environments. We are afraid that a modern reader will not feel much enthusiastic about the literary charms of the Ramayana, specially through the medium of a translation. We have, therefore, tried to be brief and simple instead of conforming to the exacting demands of a learned critic. But we have not left a single incident with its mental and physical accompaniments that finds its place in the original. Such cuts that

hurt popular sentiments are improper, if not impertinent. We are, however, guilty of one such offence, though sometimes we have taken the liberty of condensing unnecessary details and many countryside tales, and redundant anecdotes into a close compact.

In short, the present translation is a modernised version of the original. But we have omitted nothing which may be missed, though we have tried our best to adapt it to modern taste. And for this we have tried to be faithful more to the spirit than to the form of the original. Some latitudes in translating such a work are inevitable. Thus, where we thought that word per word translation would render the whole thing unreadable, we have taken the liberty of a free translation there. To have a host of adjectives attached to every noun, in a monstrously long sentence, is anything but agreeable to modern taste, and we make no secret of doing away with a lot of them, which could be done without altering the sense in any manner. In some cases, alterations were necessary in the structure of sentences and in the sequence of words. There has also been a laxity in the use of articles. We have thus attempted in our humble way to present the book in a simple, readable form, specially to enable those who are ignorant of Sanskrit to see how the thing has been treated in the original.

A few words more are necessary to indicate the line of our translation. Of the two famous recensions of the poem—the Banaras recension is more poetic than the Bengal one, and we have followed the Banaras recension in the main, though here and there we have taken the help of the Bengal text.

We have not excluded the Uttarakanda which in all probability appears to be a later addition by some other poet or poets, as the main story properly ends in the Sixth Kanda. Divisions of cantos differ in different readings, and as we have condensed sometimes different cantos into one, we have thought it more advisable to divide the the book into chapters than into cantos. Important historical, philosophical, or literary references have been given in their proper places.

Lastly, with our literary limitations, we cannot but feel diffident in presenting such a book in our poor form to the public—a book that has loomed large for centuries over the destinies of millions of people, and will continue to do so for ages to come. And for our ambitious venture we bow down to the spirit of immortal Valmiki, the jewel prints of whose hallowed feet we have dared to follow.

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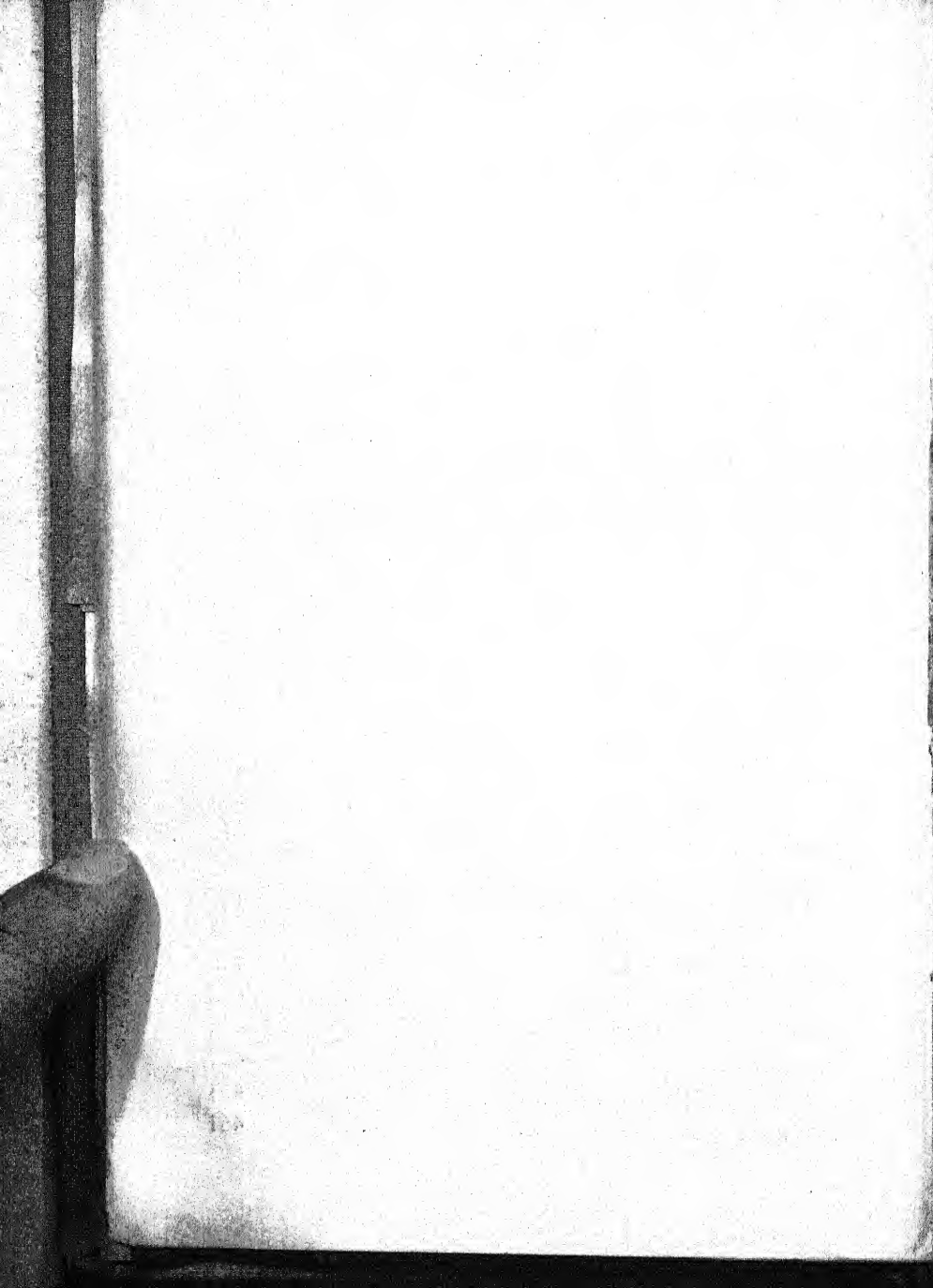
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CHAPTER 1

VALMIKI AND NARADA

The great sage Valmiki asked Narada, the foremost of the saints, versed in the Vedas, "Tell me, O Saint ! who is, at present, the most accomplished, learned, powerful, noble-minded, truthful, firm in vows, of excellent moral character, and of grateful turn of mind ? Who ministers to the good of every creature ? Who is well-familiar with manners and customs of men ? Who is peerless, clever, and beautiful to look at ? Who not subject to anger or malice ; yet whom when engaged even the gods fear to face in the battle ? Whose prowess can protect the world from evil ? On whom Fortune has emptied her choicest blessings ! Who is the best of kings, and can justly be compared with Indra, the king of heaven ? O Sage ! you alone know who is so qualified on earth. Great is my curiosity to hear."

Then, the great saint Narada, cognisant of the three worlds, cheerfully said, "O hermit ! the great qualities just now mentioned by you, are rarely to be found in ordinary mortals. Let me, however, remember and tell you who is such a qualified person on earth.

"There is a famous king by the name of Rama, born

in the line of great Ikshwaku. He is of subdued sense and of exceeding might. He has mighty arms reaching to the knees. His throat is marked with three auspicious conch-shell lines. He has high and broad shoulders, wide chest, well-formed head, graceful forehead, strongest jaws, and deeply embedded collar bones. His eyes are large, and his colour is of soft lustrous green. He is neither too tall, nor very short, but well-formed and of symmetrical limbs. This highly beautiful and mighty Rama is supremely intelligent, and of eloquent speech. He is upright, true to his vows, modest and observer of laws. His character is highly pure. He is famous, wise and possesses the knowledge of self. He is the protector of all, defender of religion and caste-system. He is the supporter of his kinsmen and friends. He is like Prajapati himself. He is the supporter of all, and the destroyer of his enemies. He always gives shelter to his devoted followers. He is deeply versed in the Vedas and Vedangas. He is highly skilled in archery, and his valour is admitted by his dying foes. He has great fortitude. He is a genius and possesses excellent memory and is profoundly learned in all the sacred lore. He is wise, compassionate and valiant. Every one is fond of him. As the ocean is served by the rivers, he is always attended upon by all good men. He metes out equal treatment to his friends and foes. This Rama is born of Kausalya's womb, and is honoured by all. In gravity, he is like the sea ; in fortitude, like the Himalayas ; in might, like Vishnu ; in beauty, like the moon ; in forbearance, like the earth ; in anger, like the doomsday fire ; in bounty, like Kuvera, the giver of wealth ; in devotion to truth, like Dharma or Religion himself.

"King Dasaratha, for the satisfaction of all people, wished to confer the crown on Rama. Finding Rama about to be installed on the throne, queen Kaikeyi, who had been previously promised two boons by Dasaratha, asked for the exile of Rama and the installation of her son, Bharata, on the throne. Bound by his promise, the truthful Dasaratha banished his dear son Rama to the forest. And Rama, for the fulfilment of his father's promise and for Kaikeyi's benefit, went into voluntary exile. Sumitra's darling, gentle Lakshmana, dear to Rama, followed him out of brotherly love.

"Then, Ramchandra's darling wife Sita, exceedingly beautiful, and possessed of all auspicious signs, born in Janaka's line, the jewel of women, who is like the embodiment of divine grace—dearer to Rama than his life, went after her husband, as the star Rohini follows the Moon. Dasaratha himself and the citizens in great sorrow followed them to a great distance.

"After some time, Rama reached the city of Sringeri on the banks of the holy Ganges, where he dismissed his charioteer Sumantra, and met Guhaka, the king of the Nishadas. Thence, after crossing deep rivers, Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana entered the forest and came to the hermitage of Bharadwaja. Following Bharadwaja's directions, Rama arrived at the Chitrakuta mountain where he raised a beautiful hut and passed his days in joy. The Chitrakuta grew bright with the presence of the illustrious three.

"When Rama left for the woods, king Dasaratha died broken-hearted, bitterly lamenting the absence of Rama. After his death, Vasishtha and other Brahmanas requested

Bharata to ascend the throne, which Bharata stoutly refused. Bharata then went to the forest to meet worshipful Rama. Bharata fell down at the feet of Rama and entreated him to come back, saying, "O Aryya ! in presence of the elder brother it is not proper for the younger brother to usurp the throne. You know this custom very well, so come back and rule your kingdom." Generous Rama was pleased with Bharata's words, but he preferred to abide by his father's decree and refused to return to his kingdom. He made over his sandals as his substitute at Bharata's insistence and induced him to go back. Then, Bharata finding that all his prayers were in vain, returned to Nandigram after profoundly bowing at Rama's feet. Bharata left Ayodhya in sorrow and disgust. He placed the sandals as Rama's substitute on the throne and began to rule from Nandigram as Rama's deputy, eagerly expecting the return of Rama.

"After Bharata's departure, fearing that others might intrude upon his seclusion, Rama left Chitrakuta and entered the mighty forest of Dandaka. The lotus-eyed Rama, after slaying a Rakshasa named Viradha in that forest, saw Maharshi Sharabhanga, Sutikishna, Agastya and Agastya's brother Idhmavaha.

"Then, according to Agastya's instructions he secured the bow, sword and the inexhaustible quiver of Indra.

"While Rama was living in the Dandaka forest, ascetics and hermits came to him for the destruction of Asuras and Rakshasas and Rama readily agreed to their proposal.

"Then one day he cut the ear and nose of Surpanakha, a denizen of Janasthana, who could assume different forms at will. Then the Rakshasas of the place being incited by Surpanakha challenged Ramchandra in a battle whereupon Rama slew Rakshasas, Khara, Trishira and Dushana with their host. About fourteen thousand Rakshasas were killed during his stay in Dandaka. Then Ravana, the king of the Rakshasas, hearing of the destruction of his kinsmen, flew into rage and asked a Rakshasa called Maricha to come to his rescue. Finding Ravana about to launch into an audacious venture, Maricha entreated Ravana to desist from it, and said, "O king! it would not be to your benefit to enter into hostilities with mighty Rama." But Ravana, urged by fate, scorned at Maricha's words and repaired to Rama's place taking Maricha with him. Rama and Lakshmana were drawn away from Sita by Maricha's wiles and Ravana carried off Sita by force. He slew the vulture, Jatayu, that obstructed him in the way. When Rama came back, he found Jatayu slain and Sita stolen. He greatly bewailed for Sita and then set out in quest of her, after cremating Jatayu in deep sorrow. While searching for Sita, Rama came across a horrible Rakshasa called Kabandha. After slaying Kabandha, Rama burnt his body. Then Kabandha rose from the flame to the funeral pyre in the beautiful form of a Gandharva and addressing Rama said, "O Rama! go to saintly Sabari and seek her advice." Rama then went to Sabari and according to her advice, he came to the banks of the beautiful Pampa Lake, where he met Hanuman, the Wind God's son. Acting on Hanu-

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man's words, Rama went to Sugriva, the chief of the Vanaras or monkeys, and told him everything concerning the sad history of Sita. Hearing this tale of sorrow, Sugriva vowed friendship with Rama in the presence of sacred fire. Then on Rama's enquiry about the cause of Sugriva's hostilities with his brother Vali, Sugriva narrated everything with a sigh. Hearing all, Rama promised to dispel Sugriva's fear by killing Vali. Sugriva who described the great prowess of Vali entertained great doubts about Rama's capacity, and pointed out the huge corpse of the giant Dundhuvī slain by Vali. Rama looked at the prostrate corpse, huge as a mountain, and with a smile threw the body hundred leagues away by a gentle push of his toe. To convince Sugriva, Rama sent a shaft which after piercing seven palms in a line and a rock, reached Rasatal or the Nether world. After witnessing these wonderful feats of strength with his own eyes, Sugriva with a contented mind accompanied Rama to Kiskindhya. After reaching Kiskindhya, Sugriva of brownish yellow colour like that of gold, began to make terrific shouts. Hearing those shouts Vali, the lord of the monkeys, after taking Tara's permission, came out and met Sugriva when at the instance of Sugriva, Rama killed Vali with one deadly shaft and gave Vali's kingdom to Sugriva. Then grateful Sugriva summoned the monkeys and sent them in various directions in search of Janaka's daughter.

"Then Hanuman at the advice of bird Sampati, crossed hundred leagues of the saltish sea and arrived at Lanka, the well-guarded city of Ravana. There he found Sita in the Asoka forest, pensive and sad.

Hanuman then delivered Rama's message, and showed her a token from Rama. He told her all about the newly-made friendship between Rama and Sugriva, and cheered up hopeless Sita with messages of hope. He then smashed down the gate of the forest. Hanuman then slew five captains, seven counsellors' sons, and Ravana's son, Aksha. He was then bound by Meghnada. Knowing that he would be soon set free by the boon of Brahma, the grandsire of all created things, he suffered himself to be carried to Ravana's presence. He then set fire to the whole of Lanka, excluding the Asoka forest, and afterwards came back from Lanka.

"Then the mighty Hanuman appeared before Rama and after going round him as a mark of profound respect, said, "My Lord, I have really seen Janaki." Hearing this from Hanuman's lips, Rama, followed by Sugriva, repaired to the sea-shore and smote the Ocean with keen shafts bright as the sun's rays. Then the God of the Ocean quickly appeared before Rama, and according to the Ocean's advice, with the help of Nala, Rama built a bridge over the sea.

"By that bridge Rama went to Lanka, slew Ravana and recovered Sita. But thinking of Sita's long confinement in Ravana's palace, Rama was stung with shame, and he used some harsh expressions towards Sita in the presence of all. Then chaste Sita, being unable to bear the insult any more, cast herself into fire. Thereupon god Agni appeared with Sita and assured Rama about Sita's stainless character. Thereupon Rama trembling with joy embraced his wife. Then the gods showered praises and blessings on Rama for his mighty deeds.

"Rama then installed the best of the Rakshasas, Bibhisana, on the throne and revived his fallen monkey-soldiers by a divine boon. After this, Rama and Sita surrounded by friends and followers set out for Ayodhya in the heavenly chariot called Puspaka through the clouds. On reaching the hermitage of Bharadwaja, Rama sent Hanuman to Bharata, and accompanied by Sugriva, Rama then started for Nandigram in the Puspaka. Arriving at Nandigram, Rama met his loyal brother and cut down his matted locks. Thus after regaining Sita, Rama got back his own kingdom. Thus, Dasaratha's son, noble Rama now rules over his people who have grown happy and prosperous in his reign. During his reign his subjects will not suffer from any disease or mental disquietitude. They will have no fear of hunger or of thieves. Cities and villages will be full of corns and wealth, and the people will live as happily as in the Golden Age. No fire or flood will devastate the land, and women will ever continue to be chaste and they will not suffer from widowhood. He will perform hundred horse-sacrifices, give away millions of cows and immense wealth to the famous Brahmanas. He will make each of the four castes stick to its own duties. Hundreds of royal families will spring from him. Having reigned for ten thousand and ten hundred years he will repair to the Brahmaloka or the high Heaven.

"Whoever will read this noble tale of Rama's deeds, sacred as the Vedas, will be free from all sins and will attain heavenly bliss with his kins. If a Brahmana reads it, he will attain excellence in speech; if a Kshatriya

does it, he will lord it over all ; if a Vaishya reads it, he will get abundance of wealth in trade ; and a Sudra will attain greatness by listening to the tale."

CHAPTER II

THE BIRTH OF POETRY

Having heard with admiration the words of Divine Narada, pious Valmiki with his pupils made due obeisance to him. Being thus honoured by Valmiki, Narada, after the expression of good wishes and with the former's leave, left for the heavenly regions.

Then, after a short stay in the hermitage, Valmiki came to the banks of the Tamasa, not far from the Gangetic stream. On arriving there and finding the bank of the river free from mud, Valmiki addressing his pupil Bharadwaja, standing by his side, said, "Look Bharadwaja ! how beautiful is this spot, free from all stains of dirt. Its glassy stream is transparent like the hearts of pious men. Now, put down your pitcher and give me my bark. I shall bathe in this sacred stream."

Obedient Bharadwaja, thus being asked, presented the bark without delay. After taking the bark from his pupil's hand, Valmiki strayed about surveying the deep, extensive forest.

At the skirts of the forest, Valmiki saw a pair of healthy Kraunchas dallying in amorous sports and singing in melodious notes. At this moment, suddenly a wicked fowler appeared and killed the male bird, without any provocation whatsoever. Then, the female bird finding its mate thus slain and rolling in the dust, besmeared with blood, raised piteous cries of despair under pangs of separation from her copper-crested, amorous companion of fluttering wings. Seeing the bird thus brought down in the very act of love, Valmiki was overwhelmed with grief. His heart melted at the piteous notes of the female bird and considering it to be a highly unrighteous act, his indignation broke forth :

"O Fowler ! since thou hast slain one of the pair of *Kraunchas* while engaged in love, thou shalt never attain any fame."

Having uttered this curse, Valmiki was struck with wonder, and repeatedly asked to himself, "What have I just now uttered being afflicted with grief for the bird !"

Then, addressing Bharadwaja, the sage said, "These words I have just now uttered are of equal feet and of even measure, and are capable of being sung in accompaniment to a stringed lyre. And since it is born of my *Shoka* (grief) let it be known as a *Sloka* (or Verse)."

When the great sage had thus spoken, his pupil Bharadwaja gladly agreed to his master's words, and Valmiki felt gratified within.

Then, Valmiki after bathing in the Tamasa and performing ablutions in the stream, returned to his hermitage pondering all the way over the composition of the verse, and his disciple Bharadwaja followed him with a pitcher brimful of water.

Having reached the hermitage Valmiki took his seat and revolved in his mind all things about the verses (which came so spontaneously to his lips).

Then the four-faced god, glorious Brahma, the Creator of Heavens and Earth, appeared before Valmiki. As soon as the holy saint saw Brahma before him, he rose from his seat in reverence and stood before him with folded hands and bent head in profound obeisance. Valmiki offered the God water to wash his feet with and other things of reception. After taking his seat, the Holy one enquired after Valmiki's welfare, and asked him to resume his seat. Valmiki then took his seat before the Sire of all created things, but his mind still revolved over the incidents of the Sloka. Valmiki thought about the sad fate of the bird and while thus absorbed in thought, he quite automatically repeated the Verse in grief, "O wicked fowler! thou shalt never attain fame for killing the tuneful Krauncha while dallying in amorous sports."

Then Brahma spoke in joy, "O thou best of the hermits, see thou hast unconsciously made a Verse. It was done at my instance. Now, the work should no

longer be delayed. Those Verses of yours shall be immortal, and I ask you, O thou best of the saints, to celebrate the life of Rama in your Verse. Relate the sacred story as you have heard it from Narada about pious and intelligent Rama, Lakshmana and Vaidehi and about the Rakshasas, including all that is hitherto known or unknown. Even what has been omitted by Narada, will come to your pen at the time of writing and no words of yours should contain any untruth. So long as the mountains and the seas exist on earth, the sacred history of the Ramayana shall endure, and you will enjoy a double life both in Heaven and on Earth."

Having said this, the worshipful Brahma disappeared, and Valmiki's pupils began to chant the Verse, and the more they sang, the more their wonder grew.

The great sage Valmiki, then in hundreds of melodious Verses, composed the story of the glorious deeds of Rama in pregnant metres. It behoves every one to hear the sacred lay about Rama's life and the destruction of Ravana.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT THEME

The great Valmiki having heard the sacred story of Rama from celestial Narada wanted to get an insight

into its true history. He then sat on a bed of grass, facing the East and after making due ablutions with water and concentrating his mind in *yôga*, he plunged himself deep into the subject. Then, through *yôga* everything became distinct to his mental eyes. He distinctly saw Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Dasaratha with his queens and counsellors talking, laughing and acting before him, as if in real life. He could then see them as clearly as he could see a myrobalan in his palm. He saw what hardships and sufferings Rama, Lakshmana and Sita underwent in their wanderings through the forests. Having thus learnt everything by *yôga*, the great Valmiki began to compose his enchanting lay of Rama, formerly told by Narada, which is pleasing to all men's ears, and in worth is like a sea of pearls.

Valmiki then repeated the story over again, *e. g.*, Rama's birth ; his prowess ; his generosity ; his forbearance ; his truthfulness ; his fortitude ; his goodness and his popularity ; Rama's talks with the great sage Viswamitra ; the formidable bow ; his marriage with Janaki ; his encounter with Parashurama ; his installation on the throne ; Kaikeyi's malice ; Rama's exile, Dasaratha's grief, and sorrow of the people. Rama's meeting with Guhaka ; his interview with Bharadwaja ; his arrival at the Chitrakuta ; Bharata's entreaties ; Rama's offering of oblations to his departed father ; giving of the sandals ; Bharata's removal to Nandigram ; Rama's entry into the Dandaka forest ; destruction of Viradha ; his interview with Sharabhang and Sutikshna ; Sita's companionship with Anusuya ; Rama's meeting with Agastya ; his obtaining arms from Indra ; Surpanakha's

disfigurement, destruction of Khara and Trishira ; death of Maricha ; carrying away of Sita ; Rama's lamentations ; the sight of the Pampa lake ; his friendship with Savari ; his meeting with Hanuman ; friendship with Sugriva ; destruction of Vali ; installation of Sugriva ; Tara's grief ; collection of troops ; the despatch of envoys ; Hanuman's meeting with Sampati ; Hanuman's crossing the sea ; his sight of Lanka ; his entry by night ; his sight of Ravana's palace and of Ravana ; Hanuman's interview with Sita in the Asoka forest ; presentation of Rama's ring to Sita ; Sita's handing a gem to Rama through Hanuman ; Hanuman's fight and burning of Lanka ; Hanuman's return ; his consolation to Rama ; Rama's interview with the ocean-god ; construction of the bridge across the sea ; siege of Lanka ; Rama's friendship with Bibhishana ; death of Kumbhakarna, Meghnada and Ravana and recovery of Sita ; ordeal of Sita ; Rama's return to Ayodhya in Puspaka ; meeting with Bharadwaja ; despatch of Hanuman to Bharata ; meeting Bharata ; Rama's installation to the throne ; dismissal of the forces ; Rama's rule ; his administration and renunciation of Sita ; and everything else that happened in Rama's life has been treated by the revered sage.

CHAPTER IV

THE SONG

When Rama got back his kingdom Valmiki composed a wonderful poem consisting of twenty-four thousand slokas. Having composed the poem, Valmiki thought of the means of communicating it to the world. When he was thinking about the means of its publication on earth, came in Kusa and Lava, two royal princes, dressed in hermit's dress and touched his feet. Valmiki, seeing those two brothers pure in character, endowed with sweet voice and good memory and capable of appreciating poetry, taught them to interpret the Vedas, and along with it the whole of the Ramayana dealing with the destruction of Ravana and of Sita's life in full.

The two brothers were beautiful like Gandharvas and were exceedingly sweet-voiced. They mastered all the notes of music. They looked like Rama, as his twin shadows. Then the two brothers, Kusa and Lava, learnt by rote the entire song of the Ramayana with all the involutions of tone, melody, measure and time, suggesting various emotions as ; pity, anger, heroism, love and sorrow. One day, Kusa and Lava bearing all auspicious marks on their beautiful persons, began to chant the great song in an assembly of pure-minded hermits, and when they heard the song, the pious ascetics were seized with delightful surprise and began to bless the boys again and again. Some in their admiration for Kusa and Lava, said, "O, how sweet is the music ! how charming is the verse ! all the exploits of Rama happened

long, long ago, but they seem to be reacted before our eyes."

Then to the delight and admiration of the assembly, Kusa and Lava began to sing in sevenfold notes of music, and the ascetics became loud in their praises as they heard the song. Then, some one in ecstasy stood up and presented to Kusa and Lava a pitcher ; some one in delight gave them a bark ; another, a dark deer-skin ; some presented sacred threads ; some, Kamandulu ; some, a twisted manju ; some, the seat of an ascetic ; some, a loin-cloth. One gave them an axe ; one, a piece of red cloth ; one, a rope to tie their matted locks ; another, a rope for tying faggots ; some, sacrificial vessel ; some, hermit's stool made of fig-tree ; and some one cried in joy, "May you live long." Thus blessed the truthful ascetics, and then they said in a body, "Wonderful is the story that has been composed by Valmiki ; it will be a source of inspiration to all later poets, and you have beautifully sung the thing, pleasing both to the ear and to the heart, conferring longevity and prosperity on the hearers."

Thus Kusa and Lava gained reputation and praise everywhere by their songs and musical performance.

On one occasion, these sweet singers were seen by Rama in a street of Ayodhya. Rama then brought them by sending his men. When they came, Rama was seated on a throne of gold. His brothers stood by him, counsellors and other retinue surrounded the king. Beholding the minstrels, Rama said to Lakshmana :

"Come, listen to the story composed in excellent measure, and fraught with lofty thoughts and deep melody."

Then the singers began to sing in clear melodious strain, raising their sweet voices to high pitch, rivaling the notes of Vina. And that song of theirs moved the assembly in ecstasy. Then high-souled Rama remarked, "These minstrels, though look like ascetics, yet they bear on their persons the signs of royalty, and the song relates to my deeds which will perpetuate my history for ever."

CHAPTER V

AYODHYA

The Ramayana treats of the history of the victorious sons of Ikshwaku who ruled through countless years from the days of Manu.

In this line, king Sagara was born who dug the sea and whom sixty thousand proud sons followed in march.

We two shall recite the noble song at length. Now listen to the story with delight.

On the banks of the Saraju lies extended the great kingdom of Kosala, rich in corns and gold, where the people pass their days in peace and happiness. And famous Ayodhya is its capital. In bygone days, the city was built by Manu, the ruler of men.

It is twelve (leagues) yojanas in length and three in breadth. It is the fairest city on earth, and is adorned with squares and palaces. It is well-watered,

its spacious roads are sprinkled with full-blown flowers, and are lined with shops and stalls. Its gates stand at even distance. In one part of the city live the artizans; in another part, arms and implements are stored. It contains high terraces with flags streaming in the air, and guarded with various arms. Its ramparts are protected by deep moats and fortified with various kinds of iron weapons. The city is thus inaccessible to all. There are gardens, theatres for females, and mango groves in the city. Merchants and traders from various countries have come to live in the city for trade.

There are seven-storied houses, elephants, horses and chariots constantly ply along its streets—a rich city beyond comparison. In every street are heard sounds of lute, drum, tabor, flute, chanting of the Vedas, and ringing of archer's bow. Wise and learned Brahmins live in the city.

CHAPTER VI

KING DASARATHA

There, in this city, once reigned king Dasaratha like Indra, the Ruler of Heaven, commanding all royal resources, and under his rule people were happy, virtuous and prosperous. All men and women were of excellent character. None of them was atheistical or untruthful or illiterate. No man or woman was devoid of grace. The city abounded in spirited horses from Kambhoj, Vahlika, Vanayu and Sindhu, and in huge elephants from the Vindhya mountain and the

layas. The Kshatriyas obeyed the Brahmins, the yas were respectful towards the Kshatriyas, and are served by the Sudras.

CHAPTER VII

COUNSELLORS

King Dasaratha had two priests, saintly Vasishtha, full to advise, and Vamdeva versed in the Vedas and sacred lore. He had other counsellors, viz., Suyajna, Vishi, Kashyapa, Gautama, long-lived Markandeya and Narayana.

King Dasaratha had eight ministers famous for their ability and devotion and their names were Dhrishti, Vishva, Surashtra, Rashtravardhan, Akopa, Dharma, and Sumantra. Peace reigned in cities and villages. They could keep their counsels, judge of affairs, were well-trained in the arts of administration and policy. Surrounded by these wise counsellors Dasaratha ruled the earth, gathering informations by means of spies, and protecting the people by his might. He never met a foe who was either his equal or superior.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMANTRA'S ADVICE

The high-souled Dasaratha, having no issue, pined for the birth of a son to perpetuate his line. Once, it came into his mind, "Why do I not celebrate a sacrifice for (obtaining) a son?" He then, with

the advice of his counsellors decided to perform Aswamedha sacrifice and called together his spiritual guides with Vasishtha at their head.

The Brahmins approved of the king's intention and said in a body, "O king, since with the object of obtaining an offspring thou hast decided so nobly, you will surely get sons after your mind."

Then the king replied, "Do (then) procure the necessary sacrificial articles, according to the instruction of my spiritual preceptors, and let loose a horse guarded by a competent person, and one of the chief family priests prepare the sacrificial ground on the north bank of the Saraju. The ceremony cannot be celebrated by every king. Particular care should be taken that it may not be defective on account of any omission. The Brahmins then embraced the monarch and retired with his permission. Hearing all about the sacrifice, the king's charioteer Sumantra said, "Listen sire, to a story of old which I have myself heard. The saint Sanat Kumar foretold how in your ancient line a son would be born." The seer said, "Kashyapa has a son named Vibhandaka, and he will get a son called Rishyasringa. He will be brought up with wood-land deer and will pass his days in the woods, and will know nothing except following the behests of his father. It is said, oh king, that he will practise two modes of Brahmacharya and spend some time by the sacrificial fire. By this time, a king called Lomapada will sit on the throne of Angas. But for the king's sin, plague and drought will visit the land and the king will ask the priests to find out some remedy

for it. The Brahmanas then will advise him to bring Vibhandaka's son by any means and to bestow his daughter Santa with due honours on him. Hearing this, the king will ask his priests and courtezans to bring Rishyasringa to him. But they will beg to be excused from fear of Vibhandaka. Then they will devise many crafty plots. Then it will be planned that young damsels expert in all sorts of blandishments, will be sent attired in hermit's dress to beguile the holy hermit with amorous wiles; and the unsuspecting youth seduced by them will leave his father's cottage. Then when Rishyasringa will leave his peaceful retreat and come to the city the troubles of the king will come to an end, and Rishyasringa will be married to Santa. Now I have related what Sanat Kumar had communicated before."

King Dasaratha then exclaimed in joy, "Tell me how they brought the holy hermit to Angas?"

CHAPTER IX

RISHYASRINGA

Thus asked by the king, Sumantra replied, "The priests said to Lomapada, "Rishyasringa has been brought up in the woods and is engaged in religious austerities and is quite ignorant of woman and sensual pleasures. Let, therefore, most beautiful girls be sent to him and they will seduce him hither."

Then the courtiers acted according to the instructions of the priests and sent fascinating courtezans to

the forest, and they stopped at some distance from the hermitage.

It happened, however, that one day, Vibhandaka's son, who never strayed from his father's retreat, while strolling about leisurely came to that spot and beheld those young beauties.

Then, to allure the youthful hermit, the bright young girls with their scented tresses tied with floral wreaths, began to sing and dance and feigned all amorous things. The whole forest became reverberated with their music, anklets' silvery chime, and sweet cuckoo-notes.

Rishyasringa gazed on them in wild surprise, and he felt a hitherto unfelt strong impulse in him. They marked his amazed look and the girls came near to him and said :

"Whose son art thou ? Why do you live alone in this wood ? We are eager to know the truth."

The young ascetic's eyes gloated upon their lovely forms. A strange longing arose in his mind and he replied :

"My father is holy Kashyapa's son, Vibhandaka, and I am called Rishyasringa. Our hermitage is closeby. Please come to our cottage ; I welcome you, gentle beauties."

They then gladly went to his cottage and Rishyasringa received them most warmly. He gave them water to wash their feet with and offered them fruits and roots to eat.

The damsels then broke forth with a merry laugh.

"We too have dainty fruits in store. Please taste the produce of our forest."

Then they gave him many luscious things, looking like fruits. Then the laughing damsels threw their arms round his neck, and whispered in his ears heavy tales of love, while their sumptuous breasts and delicate limbs pressed against the youthful hermit.

Then the wily girls took a hasty leave, saying that they were afraid of his ascetic father. When they were gone Rishyasringa felt distressed by their absence. He seemed to be possessed by a longing love, and roamed about the forest in restless steps. And the next day, Rishyasringa eagerly came to the spot where he had encountered the beautiful girls previously. As soon as those wily girls saw Vibhandaka's son, they came forward and said, "O Brahman! come to our cottage, there are various fruits and roots which you will have to your heart's content."

Rishyasringa felt tempted and he was thus vanquished, and brought over by the wily women. As soon as Rishyasringa was brought, Indra poured forth plenty of showers enlivening the earth and the spirits of men. The king received him with due honours and conferred on him his daughter Santa. Thus honoured by the king, Rishyasringa passed his days in the city with his beloved wife Santa.

CHAPTER X

THE INVITATION

"Listen, O foremost of monarchs, I shall tell what Sanat Kumar, the best of gods, has said." Thus

resumed Sumantra, "In Ikshwaku's line there will be born a pious king named Dasaratha, beautiful in appearance and true to his vows. He will be a friend of the king of Angas who will have a virtuous daughter named Santa. At one time the famous king Dasaratha will repair to him and thus speak to him, 'O noble one! I am without any issue and I wish to perform a sacrifice for it. Let Santa's husband take charge of that sacrifice. Please request him for it.'

"Hearing this, Lomapada, after thinking over the matter will make over Rishyasringa with his wife and children for the intended ceremony. After bringing Rishyasringa, king Dasaratha, glad to heart, will make preparations for the sacrifice and with supplicating prayer will invite the best of Brahmanas to conduct the ceremony. And from that Putreshti sacrifice four sons of great prowess will be born unto him.

"Thus has prophesied Sanat Kumar. Therefore, O mighty king, bring here Rishyasringa with due honours."

Dasaratha was exceedingly delighted at these words of Sumantra. Dasaratha then looked to Vasishtha for advice, who gave his glad consent to Sumantra's words.

Then Dasaratha with his queens and courtiers went to Angas where he was warmly received by his friend, Lomapada, the king of Angas. Lomapada then introduced Dasaratha to Rishyasringa who hearing of the intimate friendship between the two, received the former with warm hospitality.

Dasaratha stopped at Angas for seven or eight days. Then, after stating the object of his visit,

addressing Lomapada, he said, "Let your daughter with her husband come to my city to help my sacrifice which I intend to perform there."

Hearing this his friend Lomapada requested his son-in-law Rishyasringa to repair to Ayodhya with his wife, and Rishyasringa readily consented to his father-in-law's proposal.

Then Dasaratha and Lomapada clasped each other's palm and embraced each other in joy. After this Dasaratha set out for Ayodhya with Rishyasringa, the foremost of Brahmanas, and sent a messenger for a public celebration. "Let the whole city be decorated, let it be perfumed with sweet incense, let the streets be well-watered and let gay banners flutter in the air."

All the people awaited his return in eager joy, and as soon as the king entered the city with Rishyasringa in his company the whole city welcomed him with the blares of conch-shells and drums.

The king then took him inside his palace and accorded him due honours with rites of hospitality. In consequence of Rishyasringa's presence, the king thought that his object had been gained. And the ladies of the palace were all pleased at the sight of large-eyed Santa. Thus honoured by all, Rishyasringa and his wife passed their days.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE EVE OF THE SACRIFICE

After some time, when the sweet vernal season appeared, king Dasaratha thought of performing his sacrifice. Dasaratha then came to Rishyasringa and after bowing to the saint, he invited him to conduct the ceremony for getting sons to perpetuate his line.

The Brahman said to the king, "Let it be so. Order for necessary provisions, loose the horse and prepare the sacrificial ground on the north bank of the Saraju." Thereafter king Dasaratha addressing Sumantra said, "O Sumantra, summon Brahmins and priests versed in the Vedas and Vedangas; Suyajna, Vamdeva, Javali, Kashyapa and the priest Vasishtha." Thereupon, Sumantra bestirred himself and summoned all those versed in the Vedas. When they came, Dasaratha after showing due honours to them said:

"Having no son I have no happiness in life. Hence I intend to perform an Aswamedha sacrifice, and by the blessings of holy Rishyasringa, I am sure, I shall gain my object." The Brahmins fully agreed to his words. The king was greatly delighted at their approval and he cheerfully asked his men to make preparations for the sacrifice in accordance with the directions of the Brahmins. Then the Brahmins blessed him saying, "May your desire be crowned with success."

Dasaratha then bowed to them in profound respect and hurried to meet his queens. And when they heard

about the possibility of sons, their lotus-like faces brightened in joy, as lilies at the end of the frost.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT PREPARATIONS

Again when the spring appeared after a year, the king anxious for the birth of sons, resolved to perform the sacrifice without further delay. He then addressing Vasishtha said :

"O reverend sir, please make all preparations strictly according to the injunctions of the Sastras. Kindly see there may not be any impediment to it. You are my best friend and guide. You will have to take entire charge of the sacrifice."

Vasishtha replied, "I shall do as you desire."

Then Vasishtha summoned Brahmins well-versed in sacrificial things, wise, and aged people, architects, capable servants, carpenters, diggers, astrologers, artists, actors, dancers, learned and people of good character for the sacrifice of the king Dasaratha. He ordered to fetch bricks by thousands and thousands and raised a spacious structure for the accommodation of kings and princes and to furnish it with various kinds of furniture; then to build thousands of sheds for the Brahmins, and replenish them with food and drink. Then he directed to construct separate quarters for each one of the princes coming from distant places, and sheds for citizens, soldiers and foreigners, with proper accommodation for every one and also to construct stalls for horses and elephants. Many poor and low-class people

are expected to attend the sacrifice, beautiful huts should be raised for them. And whatever you may give to them you must give it with proper modesty, so that they may think themselves respectfully entertained. Don't neglect or despise anybody through greed or fits of temper. Those labourers and artizans who will remain engaged in the sacrificial work should also be treated with kindness, for those who work for wages if they receive beyond their expectations, accomplish their work satisfactorily and leave nothing unfinished or ill-done. So act with discretion and kindness.

Thus Vasishtha concluded. Thereupon some came forward and said, "We have done everything according to your instructions and nothing has been left undone and what you now say will be carried out to the letter."

Then Vasishtha summoning Sumantra said, "Go and invite all the great rulers, and the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras. Invite cordially the people of all provinces. Go yourself to Janaka, the truthful and valiant king of Mithila. As he is a very old ally of ours I have first mentioned his name. Then go to amiable Keshiraj, a man of character and of great virtues. Then bring with all honour the king's father-in-law, the pious ruler of Kekaya with his son: the king's friend, Lomapada the chief of Angas: the puissant ruler of Kosala; and the highly accomplished and martial king of Magadha. According to the wishes of Dasaratha also invite the rulers of East, the kings of Sindhu, Sauvira and Saurashtra.

Summon all the rulers who are friendly to us, to attend the sacrifice with their retinues. You now send envoys to them according to the instructions of the king."

Then Sumantra in obedience to Vasishtha's words, sent faithful emissaries to different rulers, and himself went to invite some of them.

After this, some men engaged in the sacrificial work, came and informed Vasishtha that they had got everything ready for the sacrifice. At this, saintly Vasishtha was greatly pleased and said unto them, "I charge you not to give anything disrespectfully to anybody. Anything given in scorn or disrespect destroys the giver as sin."

Then after two or three days, the invited kings and princes began to pour in, with gems and other rich presents to king Dasaratha.

Priest Vasishtha then informed the king of the arrival of the princes, all of whom were respectfully received. Every thing was carefully arranged for the sacrifice, and the whole place seemed to be filled with all desirable objects.

Then, according to the words of both Vasishtha and Rishyasringa, Dasaratha, one day, under an auspicious star repaired to the sacrificial ground. Thereupon, Vasishtha and other Brahmins with Rishyasringa at their head, began the great sacrifice and the king with his queens was initiated into it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SACRIFICE

After a year when the wandering sacrificial horse returned, Aswamedha Sacrifice commenced on the northern bank of the Saraju, and Rishyasringa guided its operations. All the priests duly performed their assigned parts, and after the observance of necessary Pravargya¹ and Upasads² rites. Then all the deities were worshipped ; first of all oblations were offered to Indra. Rishyasringa and other learned Brahmins began to invoke Indra and other Gods by chanting sacred Mantras of the Vedas. Then with sweet Sama hymns each deity was given his due portion of the sacrifice. Then midday ablutions took place according to Sastric rites, and the priests officiated at the third time bath of the king.

On that day no Brahmins ever felt tired, and all persons gathered there, the Brahmins, the Sudras, ascetics, monks, women, children, old and invalid people were sumptuously fed. Profuse food and drink were supplied to everybody. The Brahmins after eating to their heart's content and after praising the preparations, said, "We have been fully gratified, may all good attend upon you."

Everyday learned Brahmins performed the opera-

1 This ceremony preceded a great sacrifice without which none was allowed to take part in the latter.

2 Upasads—a ceremony of burnt offerings. A Vedic ceremony.

tions of the sacrifice according to the rules of the Sastras.

When time came for rearing the sacrificial posts or Yupas, men versed in sacrificial rites prepared six posts of Bilva, six of Khadir (*mimiosa catechu*) six of Palas (*Butea frondsia*) and one of Sleshamat (*Cardia Latifolia*) and two wide posts of Devadaru (pine). These twenty-one posts, each 21 cubits or Aratnis long having eight angles and decked in twenty one pieces of cloth were firmly planted by the artizans. Being wrapped up in cloths and decked with flowers they looked like the Seven Rishis¹ of the heavens.

The Brahmins constructed the sacrificial fire-place with bricks and that fire-place consisting on three sides of eighteen bricks looked like golden-winged Garuda ; and for the purpose of sacrifice, horses, beasts, birds, reptiles, and aquatic animals were collected. To those Yupas or posts were tied hundreds of animals as well as the horse of the king. Then Kausalya after performing the preliminary rites with a cheerful heart, slew the king's horse with three strokes. Then with the object of obtaining a son and religious merit, she with pure and calm mind passed one night by the side of the dead, winged horse from evening till the break of the day. Then the priest led other queens, Mahishis,² Vavatas³ and Parivritis to touch the horse attended by Kausalya. Then Rishyasringa made sacrifice with

1 The constellation of Ursa Major.

2 Of Kshatriya caste.

3 Vavatas of Vaishya caste and Parivritis of Sudra castes.

the marrow of the horse according to the sacred rules and king Dasaratha for expiation of his sins, smelt odour arising out of the fat cast into fire. Then sixteen Rithvik priests offered the severed limbs of the horse into sacrificial fire. The horse-sacrifice according to Kalpa Sutras and Brahmanas extends to three days. First day's ceremony is called Agnistome, second day's is named Uktha and the third day's sacrifice is called Atiratra. Then the ceremonies of Jyotishtoma, Ayus-toma, Abhijat, Atiratra, Viswajit, Aptoryama were performed with due rites.

In this great horse-sacrifice founded by Sayambhu, Dasaratha gave his Eastern region to the chief sacrificial priests, the Western province to Adwaryu, the Southern to Brahma and the Northern to Udgate.

The Brahmanas were greatly delighted and spoke in a body, "You alone are worthy to protect the earth, we do not want any land, our days are passed in meditation and in the study of the Vedas give us something else."

Then the chief of the Ikshwaku line gave them ten lakhs of kine, ten kotis of gold and forty of silver. They then brought those things to Vasishtha and Rishyasringa, at which they were greatly pleased. Then, king Dasaratha said to Rishyasringa :

"Please bless me with the perpetuation of my line."

Then the best of the Brahmins replied, "O king, four sons will be born to you to perpetuate your line."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PROPHECY

Dasaratha again said, "O holy saint, please devise some means that my race may not be extinct."

Then intelligent Rishyasringa, learned in the Vedas, said, "For your son I shall perform the famous Putresthi sacrifice according to the Mantras as laid down in the Atharva Veda. This will bless you with offspring."

Then Rishyasringa began the sacrifice according to the directions of the Kalpa Sutra. All the deities, the Gandharvas, Siddhas and other great saints appeared in person to take their due shares of the oblations offered up.

When the Putresthi sacrifice began the gods appeared before Brahma and said, "O Lord! a Rakshasa named Ravana grown mighty by your boon oppresses us all and we cannot resist him by any means. You were pleased to confer on him the boon, and we all suffer for it. This wicked-minded one is tyrannising over the three worlds and is envious of others' prosperity. Blinded by power and by your boon, he is now thinking of conquering Indra, the king of gods, and is continually harassing the saints, the Yakshas, the Gandharvas, the Brahmanas and the Asuras. The sun does not dare to scorch him with his rays, nor the wind ventures to blow roughly about him; even the billowy ocean does not dare to stir in his presence. We have become greatly afraid of that wicked and horrible Ravana. Please now devise some means for his destruction."

Then the lotus-born Brahma after some thought

replied, "O god! I have found out the means of his destruction. At the time of asking the boon from me, he asked that he might not be slain by any god. Gandharva, Yaksha and Rakshasa. And I agreed to it but in disdain he did not mention the name of Man.

"He may, therefore, be slain by a man. I do not see any other means of his death."

The gods were greatly delighted on hearing these words from Brahma's lips.

At this moment, effulgent Vishnu, lord of the universe, clad in yellow robes, wearing bracelets of shining gold and holding in his hands shell, discus, mace and lotus came there riding on his Eagle, as the sun rides upon the cloud, and was welcomed by the gods with hymns of praise. After he took his seat beside Brahma, the gods spoke to him :

"O Vishnu, be thou our shelter." Then Vishnu said, "Tell me how I may grant your prayer."

The gods said, "Dasaratha, the generous and powerful ruler of Ayodhya has three queens like Beauty, Modesty and Fame, but he is ever pining for sons. Divide yourself into four and be his sons by those three queens. Be incarnate as man on earth and slay in battle Ravana, the scourge of the world and invincible by the gods. In haughtiness of power, he is tyrannising over saints and denizens of the heaven. It is for this that we have come to you. You are our only refuge."

Then Vishnu, the adored lord of all, assured them saying, "Banish all fear. For your good I shall destroy formidable Ravana with all his race, and shall rule over the earth for eleven thousand years."

The gods then sang hymns of Vishnu. After this

lotus-eyed Vishnu agreed to divide himself into four and take his birth in Dasaratha's house.

The gods then said, "Come back to heaven after destroying insolent Ravana, the enemy of Indra, and the scourge of the world."

CHAPTER XV

HEAVENLY PAYASA

Then Narayana who himself knew means of Ravana's destruction asked the gods in what way he could destroy him. The gods said, "Formerly, this dreadful Ravana practised great austerities and penance and thereby received boon from Brahma, progenitor of the world, that none would be able to destroy him; but while asking for the boon he did not mention the name of man. So assume the form of man and kill Ravana who now commits ravages upon the heaven and carries away women by force."

Vishnu then agreed to accept Dasaratha as his father.

At that time, king Dasaratha was eagerly watching the performance of the sacrifice.

Then, from the sacrificial flame rose a huge dark figure with red eyes and clad in red, effulgent as the sun, and holding in his both hands a large golden cup with a silver cover containing celestial Payasa¹ within it. His voice was deep like the rattle of a drum, his body was covered with hairs like that of a lion, his face was covered with profuse beard and whiskers, and his

¹ Rice or grains boiled with sugar and milk, akin to porridge.

THE RAMAYANA

locks of hair were glossy. His body was adorned with divine ornaments and he had many auspicious marks on him. He was tall like a mountain peak, and dreadful like fire.

That supernatural person in tiger-like haughty steps rose out of the flame, and casting his eyes on Dasaratha said, "O king, know me as being sent by Prajapati."

Dasaratha in folded hands replied, "Tell me what I may do for you."

Then that person commissioned by Prajapati said, "O king, you have got heavenly Payasa by worshipping the gods. Give this healthy and procreating Payasa prepared by Prajapati to the queens and you will obtain your desired object through them for which you are performing the sacrifice."

King Dasaratha with a cheerful mind took the golden vessel from his hand, and was immensely delighted at receiving the Payasa, as a poor man feels on the receipt of wealth. Then the king greeted him and went round in joy. The errand being over, the divine person, vanished into the flames.

As the sky appears beautiful by the rays of the autumnal moon, Dasaratha's palace shone with the bright and cheerful faces of the royal dames.

Then entering the seraglio, Dasaratha said to Kausalya, "O dear ! take this nectar-like Payasa and you will obtain a son."

Saying this, Dasaratha gave her half of the Payasa and then, at the request of the king, Kausalya gave half of that to Sumitra. Dasaratha then gave the remaining half to Kaikeyi and requested her to give half of it to

Sumitra. Thus Dasaratha distributed the nectar-like Payasa amongst his queens, and they were greatly delighted at this.

Shortly after, his queens grew big with child, and Dasaratha became elated like Indra adored by gods and saints.

CHAPTER XVI

THE VANARAS

After Vishnu took his birth, Sayambhu the self-existent Lord of all, addressing the Gods, said, "To help our well-wisher, Vishnu, do you create powerful creatures capable of assuming different forms at will. All those helping beings must be heroic quick as the wind, intelligent, versed in laws and in the arts of war and peace, possessing excellent bodies, and they must be invincible and indestructible like the immortals. Produce from Apsaris, Gandharvis, celestial dames, and female monkeys a powerful progeny of apes or monkeys as I had created the king of bears, Jambumana when I yawned."

Hearing these words of Sayambhu the Gods began to procreate sons in the form of monkeys. Maharshi, Siddhas, Vidyadhar, Uruga, Kimpurusha, Tarkshya, Yaksha began to create monkeys.

Indra procreated Vali tall as the Mahendra's peak, the Sun, Sugriva ; Vrihaspati, Tarak, the intelligent of the apes ; God Kuvera, the beautiful Gandhamadan ; Viswakarma, Nala ; and Agni, Neela. Then two beautiful Gods Aswinikumar produced Maindra and Dividik ; Varun, Sushena ; Parjanya, Sarava ; and Wind God, Hanuman, hard as the thunderbolt and

quick as the eagle. Thus the powerful monkeys were created. These monkeys were endowed with great strength like lions and daring like tigers and could go wherever they wished. They fought by hurling huge stones and with their teeth and nails, and were accomplished in the use of all weapons. They could move hills, crush forests and stir up the sea. Thus millions of powerful Vanaras came into existence. Some of these monkeys came to live in the summit of the Rikshavna hills. Some of these monkeys took Vali as their leader ; some, Sugriva ; some, Nala ; some, Neela ; and some, Hanuman. And the mighty Vali protected Valluka and the Go-langula races of monkeys. Thus for the help of Rama a powerful breed of monkeys were created.

CHAPTER XVII

BIRTH OF RAMA

After the Aswamedha sacrifice was over the gods and the invited guests repaired to their respective places. Then the great saint Rishyasringa having been duly honoured by the king, left Ayodhya with his devoted wife Santa who was dearer to her lord than Paulomi to Indra. The king himself with his retinue escorted the great sage to a great distance when Rishyasringa requested the king to retire, at which Dasaratha returned with tearful eyes.

Then after the expiry of the six seasons and on the completion of the twelfth month, on the ninth lunar day of the month of Chaitra, under the star Punarvasu, with the Sun, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus at Aries, Capricorn, Libra, Cancer and Pisces ; and when the

Moon with Jupiter entered Cancer of the Zodiac, Kausalya gave birth to great and prosperous Rama with mighty arms, rosy eyes and scarlet lips, the joy of Dasaratha and the adored of all people. He bore all auspicious marks on his fair body. Then queen Kausalya looked like Aditi, the mother of the gods, with Purandara in her lap. Kaikeyi then gave birth to truthful Bharata—the fourth part of Vishnu. Then Sumitra delivered twin sons. Bharata was born under the Star Pushya, when the Sun entered Pisces and the two sons of Sumitra were born under the Star Aslesha when the sun rose in the Cancer.

Thus four sons of Dasaratha were born. They were beautiful like the stars of the heaven as Proshthapad's four-fold light. At their birth, the Gandharvas began to sing and Apsaras danced in joy, kettledrums were played in the heaven, and clouds showered flowers on earth. High festivities were held by the people of Ayodhya, and its highways became crowded with the citizens and musicians and dancers gave proofs of their skill to the public; and the king gave liberally to all—bards, astrologers and others and thousands of kine to the Brahmanas.

At the expiry of the eleventh day the king performed the naming ceremony of his sons, and Vasishta in great delight conferred the names. The eldest one was called Rama. Kaikeyi's son was named Bharata and Sumitra's first son was named Lakshmana and the last of the twin born was called Satrugna. The king fed the Brahmanas, and all rural and urban people sumptuously and gave gold and jewels to the Brahmanas.

Of the princes, eldest Rama was the delight of his

father and the object of general regard. All of them were heroic, virtuous, educated and versed in the Vedas. Most puissant Rama of spotless character, like the full Moon, was the delight of all eyes. He was an expert rider, an adept in managing chariot and could ride elephants. He was a master bowman, and was ever engaged in the study of arms, and in ministering to his father's wishes.

Auspicious Lakshmana was deeply attached to Rama even from his early infancy. He was always attentive to the wishes of Rama. He never ate anything unless Rama partook of it first. He could not even sleep without Rama's company. When Rama went a-hunting Lakshmana always followed him with bow in his hand. Lakshmana's younger brother Satrugna was likewise devoted to Bharata and was dearer to the latter than life.

Like Brahma, the lord of all created beings, Dasaratha felt exceedingly happy on account of his four glorious sons.

CHAPTER XVIII

VISWAMITRA'S ARRIVAL

On the attainment of the youth of his sons, king Dasaratha thought about the marriage of his boys. When Dasaratha was thinking about the nuptials of his sons, there dropped in the great sage Viswamitra of immortal fame.

Desiring to see the king, Viswamitra said to the warders, "Go and inform the king that Gadhi's son is come."

At this warders hurried to the Royal chamber and informed the king of the arrival of the saint.

As soon as Dasaratha heard of this, he with his priests hastened to meet the ascetic, as Indra goes to meet Vrihaspati,¹ the heavenly priest, and offered him Arghya.² Having accepted the Arghya saintly Viswamitra enquired about the welfare of the kingdom, about the royal exchequer, cities, provinces and the Royal family. Viswamitra then asked :

"Are the subordinate princes obedient to you ? Are your enemies vanquished ?

"Are all the duties to man and gods being properly discharged ?"

He then enquired about the welfare of Vasishtha and other saints.

When Viswamitra was seated, king Dasaratha most respectfully said :

"O great saint, you are welcome like nectar itself, like rain after drought, like the birth of son to an issueless man, like the recovery of a lost thing, like joy at the time of great festivity. Have your journey been safe ? May I know your wishes ? It is my good luck that you have come to my house. Formerly, by great austerities you first attained the status of a Rajarshi³ then that of Brahmarshi.⁴ I have been already sanctified by your presence. Pray, tell me the object of your

1 In one reading there is Brahma, in another, it is not Indra but Vasava.

2 Mark of hospitality and honour.

3 A royal saint.

4 A Brahmin saint.

visit, so that I may gladly do your bidding. You should not feel any hesitation. Surely great merit will accrue to me by your auspicious presence."

CHAPTER XIX

VISWAMITRA'S SPEECH

Hearing these words of Dasaratha, Viswamitra with his hair standing on end in joy, cheerfully said :

"O king, you are born in a great and illustrious line, saintly Vasishtha is your councillor. These words befit you alone on earth. Now I shall tell you the object of my coming. O king, recently I have begun a sacrifice. But before it has been completed two formidable Rakshasas called Maricha and Subahu, who can assume any form at will, have impeded the sacrifice by throwing flesh and blood on the sacrificial altar. Having seen the rites thus disturbed I have left the place in despair. All my labours have been in vain.

"At the time of sacrifice it is not proper to curse anybody so I could not give vent to my wrath against those Rakshasas. O king, therefore, place your eldest son Rama in my charge. Being protected by me, he will be able to destroy those Rakshasas by his divine prowess. By my blessings he will be famous in the three worlds. Do not fear. Maricha and Subahu won't be able to stand before him. They are no match for Rama. I assure you, they will be slain by Rama. Myself, Maharshi Vasishtha and others know his might. If you desire to acquire great merit and fame and if Vasishtha and other councillors agree, then place lotus-eyed Rama in my hand. I want him for my work. Rama too has passed his boyhood. So allow Rama to accom-

pany me and to remain with me for ten nights during my sacrifice. Please see that the time of my sacrifice be not over. Don't be nervous or sad. Good will ensure to you."

Hearing these words king Dasaratha fell into a swoon as if from a great shock of sorrow.

CHAPTER XX

DASARATHA'S REPLY

King Dasaratha on regaining his consciousness sorrowfully said :

"O saint ! Rama is only about sixteen. He is not yet fit to fight with the Rakshasas. I am master of millions of troops, I shall go with my army and fight with those rovers at night. I shall myself protect your sacrifice with bow in my hand, and shall fight with the Rakshasas till death. Rama is too young and inexperienced, he has not yet acquired proficiency in arms or in war. Moreover, the Rakshasas are very cunning fighters. So, I don't think Rama is a fit match for them. Besides O saint, I cannot bear Rama's absence even for a moment. If it is your intention to take Rama then please also take me with my forces along with him. O Kusika's son, I am nine thousand years old. I have obtained Rama after great woe. Of the four sons, Rama the eldest, is the delight of my heart. So please, do not take him. Besides who are these Rakshasas ? Whose sons are they ? Who helps them ? By what means these cunning warriors will be slain ? Please tell me everything."

Maharshi Viswamitra replied, "I have heard, there is a mighty Rakshasa named Ravana born in the line

of Maharshi Pulastya. Having obtained boon from Brahma, he is tyrannising over the three worlds with his Rakshasas. He is Maharshi Visrava's son and brother of Kuvera, the lord of wealth. He disdains from pride of disturbing the sacrifice himself. So he has commissioned Maricha and Subahu for the purpose. Maricha and Subahu at his instance are disturbing my sacrifice."

Thereupon Dasaratha said, "O Saint, I won't be able to fight against that wicked Ravana. It is my great misfortune. Astonishing is the prowess of Ravana, so I have heard. Not to speak of man, even the gods cannot stand his might. I can't fight against him or his forces. And whether you take my army or my sons you won't be able to stand before him. My beautiful Rama is first of tender years, secondly, he knows very little about battle. So how can I venture to send him along with you? Maricha and Subahu then are the sons of Sunda and Upasunda and are frightful like death itself. So I can't allow Rama to accompany you. If you wish, I may with my men go and fight against those powerful Rakshasas. If you do not agree to it I entreat you to give up Rama."

CHAPTER XXI

VISWAMITRA'S ANGER

Having heard this Viswamitra flew into rage and addressing the king, he angrily commenced :

"At first you promised to grant my prayer, now you are backing out. In fact, such a thing I never expected from one born in Raghu's line. For this act of impiety your dynasty will be extinct. If you want to break

your words and desire the destruction of your race then tell me so and let me go to my own place and you enjoy yourself with your friends."

Even the gods became frightened at this great outburst of Viswamitra's rage. Seeing the three worlds in trepidation with fear, sage Vasishtha said to Dasaratha :

"Born in the famous line of Ikshwaku you should be like virtue's self. You must not deviate from duty. People know you to be righteous, so keep your promise. If you do not stick to your words, your merits will come to an end. Doesn't matter, whether Rama is skilled in arms or not, the Rakshasas won't be able to do any harm, since Viswamitra himself will protect him, as fire protects the heavenly nectar. Therefore, send Rama. Rama is Justice incarnate on earth. He is the wisest and mightiest of all, he is the protector of all religious penance and is skilled in weapons. But this fact is little known. And the great sage you see before you is not less mighty. Formerly, when this great sage ruled over his kingdom, God Siva gave him some divine arms. They are born of Krisaswa and of Prajapati Daksha's daughters, Jaya and Suprabha. They are of different forms. Kusika's son is quite conversant with their use.

"He is a great sage ; the past, present and future are known to him. Therefore, do not hesitate for a moment to send Rama with him. Viswamitra himself can destroy those Rakshasas, it is for the benefit of Rama that he wants him."

Dasaratha was greatly delighted by these words of Vasishtha.

CHAPTER XXII

MANTRAS

Then Dasaratha with a glad heart sent for Rama and Lakshmana. Kausalya and the king himself performed all the auspicious rites. Priest Vasishtha began to chant auspicious mantras. Dasaratha after smelling Rama's head, in cheerful mind made him over to Viswamitra.

Seeing lotus-eyed Rama follow Viswamitra, gentle breeze, free from dust, began to blow softly, tambour was sounded in the sky, flowers were showered from above, and conch-shells were blown from every part of the city. The raven-locked Rama and Lakshmana followed the saint with bows, quivers, swords, and gloves for the protection of the fingers. In fact, their beauty produced a halo (of glory) around them.

After proceeding over half a league from Ayodhya and arriving at the right bank of the Saraju, Viswamitra addressed Rama in a sweet voice, "Rama, my boy, make ablutions with this water of the river. No more time should be wasted now.

"I shall initiate you into the Mantras of Vala and Ativala. This will remove all the fatigue of fever of a long journey and your look will not be in any way changed. Whether you sleep or remain unguarded Rakshasas won't be able to defeat you by surprise. If you practise this mantra in the form of Japa, none in the three worlds will be equal to you in strength or intelligence.

"With the help of these mantras you will be able to overcome all difficulties. You will never be troubled by hunger or thirst. These Vala and Ativala lie at the

root of all knowledge! They are the daughters of Brahma. I wish to confer them on you, since you are worthy of them. You have got virtues no doubt, yet you will be greatly benefited by these Mantras."

Then mighty Rama after due oblations received the Mantras and on receiving them Rama looked resplendent like the autumnal sun.

At the advent of night, Rama performed all the duties of a pupil towards Viswamitra. Then Viswamitra passed the night on the bank of Saraju. Rama and Lakshmana lying on the unaccustomed bed of grass, did not feel uncomfortable on account of Viswamitra's sweet conversations.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE JOURNEY

When the night was over, sage Viswamitra said, "My boy, the night is over. It is time for morning service. Now leave your bed."

At these words of Viswamitra, Rama and Lakshmana left their pallet, had their bath and performed their Sandhya. Viswamitra then proceeded with them. In their journey, Rama and Lakshmana saw the confluence of the Saraju with the Ganges, flowing in three courses, on the banks of which were the hermitages of the ascetics and saints who had been practising religious austerities for thousands of years. They were greatly delighted at the sight, and pointing to a particular hermitage, they asked, "Whose hermitage is this? Who lives here? We are curious to know."

Then Viswamitra answered with a smile, "Listen, to whom the hermitage belonged in the past. That god

Ananga whom the people call Kama, once lived in flesh and blood, and this asylum belonged to him. It so happened that once Siva, the great Lord of Kailash, after breaking his meditation (*Samadhi*) was going in company with the gods, when foolish Kama dared to disturb his mind. Thereupon, the God Rudra eyed him in wrath and the poor Kama was at once reduced to ashes. Henceforward Kama came to be known as Ananga. Pious sages live in these hermitages. We shall pass our night at this confluence of the Ganges and the Saraju."

When Viswamitra was thus addressing Rama, the ascetics of the forests became aware of their presence by virtue of their *yoga*, and they soon appeared before them and received them with warm hospitality and offered *arghya* to Viswamitra.

At last the day waned and they performed their evening prayer. Viswamitra with Rama and Lakshmana retired for rest. And Viswamitra entertained the ascetics along with Rama and Lakshmana by his pleasant talks.

CHAPTER XXIV

TARAKA

On the following morning after due ablution, Viswamitra arrived at the bank of the Ganges, where the ascetics brought a fine boat and said, "With these two princes get upon the boat and cross the Ganges." After doing due honour to them, Viswamitra, with Rama and Lakshmana, began to cross the Ganges flowing towards the ocean. While they were steering along the stream, they heard a tremendous noise. Reaching the mid-

stream Rama and Lakshmana grew eager to ascertain the cause of the sound due to the dashing of the waves against the boat." Hearing this Viswamitra replied :

"O Rama, there is an excellent lake in the Kailash created by Brahma. As it was created out of Brahma's mind (Manasa), it is known as the Manasa Lake. The sacred Saraju that flows by Ayodhya rises from that lake and this loud sound issues from the place where it falls into the Ganges. Look ! how the waves of the Ganges and the Saraju break against the boat. Bow down to the sacred streams with a devout mind."

Thereafter, Rama and Lakshmana landed on the right bank and proceeded along it with quick steps. In their journey Rama saw a deep and dreadful forest. He then addressing Viswamitra said, "How dense is this forest filled with the humming noise of the crickets and abounding in ferocious animals. Various kinds of birds are screaming frightfully day and night. Lions, tigers, elephants, wild boars are prowling about here and there. Dhava, Sal, Bignonia, Patalas, Badaris, and other kinds of trees are to be found everywhere. Which forest is this ?"

Viswamitra replied, "Listen, O Kakustha, to whom belongs this terrible forest. Formerly, there were two flourishing cities called 'Malada' and 'Karush' built by heavenly architects. Formerly, at the time of the destruction of Vritra, Indra here incurred sin for killing a Brahmin, and here the Gods and the ascetics, soothed the king of gods with the waters of the Ganges, and Indra being pleased conferred a boon, in consequence of which these two places attained great prosperity afterwards.

"Then after a lapse of years a Yakshini was born who could assume different forms at will. Her name is Taraka. She was the wife of Sunda. She devastated these two localities. She possessed the strength of thousand elephants. Her son is called Maricha. She has a capacious mouth and strong arms. Taraka is the terror to all. She is now about half a yojana away. We shall have to pass through that forest, and we rely upon the strength of your arms. For nobody else but you can destroy this dreadful Taraka."

CHAPTER XXV

THE STORY OF TARAKA

Hearing this, Rama said, "O sir, I have heard that Yakshas possess little strength or prowess. How could this woman then possess the strength of thousand elephants?" Viswamitra replied, "Listen, how she has come to possess this great strength. Formerly, there was a mighty Yaksha named Suketu but he had no issue. He was pure, and used to practise great austerities. Brahma was highly pleased at this, and conferred on him a daughter endowed with the strength of thousand elephants. She is Taraka. When Taraka attained her youth, she was married to Jambha's son Sunda. After some time, Taraka gave birth to a son, named Maricha. This Maricha was born as Rakshasa in consequence of a curse.

"Once, the great saint Agastya destroyed Sunda. After the death of Sunda, Taraka with her son determined to take revenge on the saint. Taraka in anger ran to devour Agastya. At this, the saint cursed Maricha saying, "Do thou become a Rakshasa." He also cursed

Taraka saying, "Since in frightful form you have come to devour a man, you be a Rakshasi of terrible form "

"Thus cursed by Agastya, Taraka laid waste this fair region, where Agastya is engaged in meditation and sacred rites. Do thou, therefore, O descendant of Raghu, destroy the terrible Rakshasi for the welfare of Brahmanas and cows. Now in the three worlds none but you dare to slay this cursed Yakshi. Nor should you shrink from killing her in the interest of the four orders of castes, simply from the consideration that is a woman. An act may be cruel or sinful, yet it should be performed by a ruler for the protection of his subjects. This is the eternal rule of conduct for those who are engaged in the act of administration. O Kakustha ! kill this wicked Taraka as in the days of yore Indra slew Virochana's daughter Manthara when she tried to destroy the world. O Rama, formerly, Vishnu also destroyed Kavya's mother, the devoted wife of saint Bhrigu when, at the request of the Asuras, she desired the destruction of Indra. Gods and princes have killed many wicked women. Therefore, Rama, banish your prejudice against woman-slaughter and kill this wicked one."

CHAPTER XXVI

DEATH OF TARAKA

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Hearing this Raghava with folded hands replied, "O mighty saint, at the time of coming, father has asked me to obey you in all your commands. So I shall kill Taraka in the interest of all people."

Saying this, Rama took up his formidable bow and

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twanged the bow-string, resounding the whole forest with its sound. At this sound the denizens of the forest were greatly perturbed and Taraka too, at first, was greatly amazed and then in great anger rushed in the direction from which the sound proceeded.

Beholding that colossal, hideous figure Rama addressed Lakshmana and said :

"Look you Lakshmana ! how terrible is that Yakshini ! her very sight strikes terror even into the hearts of the brave. She possesses all the spells of a witch. I shall cut her nose and ears, but I have not the heart to kill her since she is a woman."

As Rama said this, Taraka in extreme wrath rushed towards him with uplifted arms and thundering roars.

Thereupon, Viswamitra said, "May victory attend the descendant of Raghu."

Instantly, Taraka raised a cloud of dust from the ground and began to shower a fusillade of stones. Thereupon Rama in anger, with his shafts, cut off the hands of Taraka. And when she was roaring in agony, Lakshmana lopped off her nose and ears. Thereupon she assumed various forms and began to shower stones being invisible to the sight. Seeing Rama and Lakshmana exposed to a regular fusillade of stones, Viswamitra said, "O Rama, banish thy aversion to woman-slaughter. She is highly wicked and impious. Therefore, kill before dusk, for Rakshasas grow most formidable when darkness sets in."

Rama then smothered the Yakshi with his shafts, but still the dreadful Yakshi rushed towards Rama. Rama then pierced her breast with arrows, and she dropped down dead. At her destruction the gods, with

Indra at their head, blessed the great saint Viswamitra and both Rama and Lakshmana from above and asked Viswamitra to confer on Rama the heavenly arms as he was worthy of them, and the great work of the gods would be accomplished by him.

CHAPTER XXVII

HEAVENLY ARMS

After the night was over, Viswamitra said to Rama, "I have been greatly pleased with you. May all good crown your life. I shall now confer on you some celestial weapons, with the help of which you shall be able to conquer everything at ease."

Having mentioned the names of various weapons Viswamitra sat facing the East deeply absorbed in meditation. Then those heavenly arms appeared and said, "O Rama ! we are your slaves. You may do with us as you like."

Rama with a cheerful mind touched them and said, "Appear before me when I remember you."

Thus pure Rama having received those heavenly weapons, addressing Viswamitra, said, "Please teach me how to use these heavenly arms ; how to apply them and how to withdraw them." Viswamitra then taught him the Mantras about their use.

Having acquired skill in the use of heavenly arms Rama again proceeded along his journey, and on the way he saw a pleasant and beautiful forest, and out of curiosity he asked Viswamitra whose hermitage it was.

Viswamitra replied, "It was formerly the hermitage of Vamana, and here he attained his spiritual bliss and therefore the place is known as Siddhasram.

"In the days of yore Lord Vishnu dwelt here for many thousand years. At that time, Virochana's son, Vali, the famous Danava king, ruled over the three worlds by conquering Indra and other deities by his might. At one time, king Vali performed a great sacrifice. Then the gods with Agni at their head, approached Vishnu and requested him to do a thing for the benefit of the Gods before Vali's sacrifice was over. They said, "People from various quarters are going to the sacrificial place for arms and having their prayers granted, and Vali, too, gives whatever one begs of him. Therefore, for the benefit of the Gods please assume the form of a dwarf."

"When the Gods thus implored Narayana, Kashyapa with Aditi was observing a long vow and time came for receiving boon from Vishnu.

"Vishnu then appeared before Kashyapa, and Kashyapa said, "Myself, Aditi and other gods pray that you may incarnate as my son in the womb of Aditi."

"Then Narayana was born in Aditi's womb as a dwarf or Vamana. Vamana, appearing before Vali asked for ground measured by three steps and under the plea of asking for alms he covered the three worlds by three foot-steps. Having thus restrained Vali he again made Indra the lord of the world, and here dwelt Vamana and myself out of reverence towards him have selected the spot as my hermitage. Here you will have to slay those wicked Rakshasas who come here to disturb the sacrifice. This hermitage is as much thine as mine."

"Saying this, Viswamitra entered the forest with Rama and Lakshmana, like the moon emerged from mist the Punarvasu stars.

Rama then asked Viswamitra to begin his sacrifice, that very day. Rama and Lakshmana having passed the night peacefully left their beds early in the morning.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FIGHT WITH THE RAKSHASAS

Rama and Lakshmana asked Viswamitra in the morning to indicate to them when they would have to resist Maricha and Subahu. As Viswamitra was engaged in sacrifice he remained silent, at which other hermits said, "As the sage is now engaged in penance, he will observe silence for six consecutive days and nights. So you protect the forest for these six nights."

At these words of the hermits, Rama and Lakshmana clad in armour and with bows in hand guarded the forest day and night. Thus five days passed and on the sixth day Rama said to Lakshmana, "You must now always be on the alert."

The sacrifice was going on, and Viswamitra and other priests were reciting the Mantras, Kusha, Kasha,¹ flowers, and drinking vessels were arranged round the altar, and the sacred fire was lit upon it. As in the rains, the sky grew cloudy and loud with thunder, so the Rakshasas began to pour in, in great haste and noise. Maricha and Subahu began to rain drops of blood on the sacrificial altar.

At this Rama cast his eyes upwards and finding the Rakshasas rushing in a body, addressing Lakshmana said, "I don't like to kill these poor Rakshasas now but

1 Sacred grass used in sacrifice and other sacred rites.

shall drive them off by the Manava weapon, as the wind chases off the clouds."

The Manava weapon rolled back the Rakshasas with Maricha into the sea, and then with Agneya-Astra (fire-arms) Rama killed Subahu in the fight. At this all the hermits were greatly pleased and began to honour Rama like Indra, the conqueror of Gods and Asuras. Viswamitra then performed the sacrifice without any further disturbance. After the performance of the ceremony, Viswamitra blessed Rama and praised him for his prowess. Thus after slaying the Rakshasas Rama and Lakshmana passed the night in the forest.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BOW

In the morning Rama and Lakshmana appeared before Viswamitra beaming like fire and said, "Please command what more we are to execute." Then the ascetics with Viswamitra replied, "A great sacrifice is to be performed by Janaka, the king of Mithila. All of us and you will witness there a wonderful bow. In the days of yore this bow was given to king Devarat by the Gods. Not to speak of men, Gods, Gandharvas, Asuras and Rakshasas cannot put string to that bow.

"Many mighty princes formerly came to examine its strength but none of them could put string to the bow. Janaka has got this bow from the Gods as a reward of his sacrifice. He now worships that bow as his deity with flowers and incense. You will behold that wonderful bow and also sacrificial rites of Janaka."

Then at time of setting out for Mithila Viswamitra addressing the sylvan gods said, "My object has been

gained. I am now proceeding towards the north to the Himalaya regions on the banks of the Bhagirathi."

Ascetics and other denizens on the banks of the forest—beasts and birds—escorted Viswamitra to a great distance. In the evening Viswamitra reached the banks of the river Sone.

CHAPTER XXX

GENELOGY OF VISWAMITRA

After the performance of the evening services Rama said to Viswamitra, "Please tell me which place is this, I feel curious to know."

Viswamitra said, "In ancient times there was a saintly king named Kusha. He was the son of Lord Sayambhu. Kusha's wife was Bhaidharbhi. Four sons like unto himself in prowess, were born to him. They were named Kushambha, Kushanabha, Amurtaraja and Vasu.

"Once Kusha called his sons before him and told them to learn the art of governing the people and thereby acquire the merits of a Kshatriya.

"After this, the four sons founded four seats of Government.

"Kushambha founded the city of Kaushambha; Kushanabha, the city of Mahadaya; Amurtaraja, Dhamanaranya and Vasu, the city of Girivraja. This Girivraja with its five hills and the river belong to Vasu. This river Sone is also known as the Maghadhi, because it has issued from the province of Maghada. Flowing between the five hills it looks like a garland of flowers. Look, how its extended banks are rich with corns.

"Ghritachi was Kushanabha's wife. Hundred daughters were born unto her. In time they attained their youth. Once these young girls, beautiful as lightning in the rains, were sporting themselves with songs and dancing in the garden. Being charmed with their beauty, like stars in a cloudless sky, the Wind-god appeared before them and sued them for their hands, saying, "Be my wives and you will enjoy long lives. Human youth is transient but I shall confer eternal youth and immortality on you."

"The girls burst forth in a mocking laugh at these incoherent words of the Wind-god and said, "You know the hearts of all creatures. We also know thy might but why do you insult us thus? We are the daughters of king Kushanabha. We may rob you of your quality and rank, but we refrain from it as we shall then lose our religious merits. O foolish one! may that time be yet distant when, to the insult of our virtuous father, we shall ourselves choose our husbands. Father is our master. We shall accept that person as our husband on whom father will be pleased to bestow us."

"At this, the Wind-god became highly enraged. He broke their limbs and bent their frames by entering into their bodies. The girls then returned home with their ugly forms and began to weep bitterly. Kushanabha was greatly pained at the sight of his daughters and enquired about the cause of their miseries. The girls then narrated everything about their mishaps with the Wind-god.

"At this, Kushanabha was greatly pleased, and he praised them for their great forbearance. "Forbearance," said he, "is charity; forbearance is truth; forbearance

is sacrifice ; forbearance is fame ; forbearance is religion. The whole universe rests on forbearance."

"Kushanabha then thought about their marriage and consulted with his ministers. .

"At that time a Brahnana named Chuli was engaged in great religious austerities, and one Gandharva woman called Somada—Urmila's daughter—attended on him. After some time, the ascetic was pleased with Somada, asked what he could do for her. Somada then gratefully said, "I ask for the birth of a virtuous son through your grace. I am still a maid and you be pleased to fulfil the desire of my heart."

"Then ascetic Chuli being pleased with her, conferred on her a mind-begotten son called Brahmadatta. Brahmadatta founded the great city of Kampilya. King Kushanabha thought of giving his daughters to this Brahmadatta. When at the time of marriage Brahma-datta touched the hands of his brides all their ugliness and crookedness of forms were at once removed, and they got back their former beauty. After marriage Brahmadatta returned with his wives to Kampilya.

"After this, Kushanabha performed the Putresthi sacrifice for the birth of a son. When the sacrifice was begun, king Kusha addressing Kushanabha said, "My boy, you will be soon blessed with a virtuous son named Gadhi, and you will become famous on account of Gadhi "

"Then, after some time, a highly virtuous son named Gadhi was born to Kushanabha. O Kakustha, that pious Gadhi is my father. I am called Kaushika, because I am sprung from Kusha's line. I had a sister born before me, and her name was Satyavati and she was

married to Richika. Following her lord she ascended Heaven in person, and my generous sister Kushiki assumed the form of a river for the welfare of all creatures. My sister is now a noble river issuing from the Himalayas. Out of affection for my sister, Kushiki, I live in the vicinity of the Himalayas. It was for the purpose of completing the sacrifice that I came to Siddhasram. I have told you the history of my life. Now you retire to sleep. The trees stand motionless, the birds of the air and beasts of the field are hushed in silence. The sky is illumined with bright stars like blooming eyes."

Rama and Lakshmana then retired to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ORIGIN OF THE GANGES

In the morning, Viswamitra roused Rama and Lakshmana from sleep and set out for their journey. After walking a long distance they saw the sacred Janhavi, visited by swans and cranes. They then bathed in the stream and offered oblations to the Gods and to the manes of their ancestors. Rama then asked Viswamitra, "O holy sire! I wish to hear how the Ganga flowing in three directions and embracing the three worlds falls into the ocean—the lord of rivers."

Viswamitra replied, "O Rama! Himavat (the Himalayas) is the foremost of mountains and hills. Two lovely daughters were born to him. Menaka, the beautiful daughter of Meru was the beloved wife of Himavat, and Ganga is her eldest daughter. Her second daughter is known as Uma. Once upon a time, the Gods in a body besought Himavat for Ganga flowing in three

directions. Thereupon for the welfare of the three worlds he conferred on them his daughter flowing at will and sanctifying all beings. The Gods then went away with Ganga. The other daughter adopted a stern vow and practised asceticism. Himavat married Uma to Rudra. O Raghava ! these daughters of Himavat are worshipped by all."

Rama and Lakshmana then requested Viswamitra why Ganga flowed in three directions. Thereupon Viswamitra said, "In days of yore the blue-throated God, Mahadeva, was in union with his Sakti Uma but that union was unbroken though hundred years of the Gods had passed away. The Gods became naturally anxious : they then prayed to Mahadeva. Rudra being pleased, restrained his divine energy and cast the germinal seed on earth. The earth overflowed with that divine energy. Fire and Wind then entered into it and developed into a white hill and a forest of glossy Sara reeds. And in this Sara jungle mighty Kartikeya sprang from Fire. Uma then cursed the Gods in anger saying that since she failed in getting a son their wives would be issueless. She then cursed the earth that she would have various forms and many would lord over her and she would never experience motherly affection. Seeing the Gods thus distressed, Byomkesa went towards the west and engaged himself in religious meditation. I shall now tell you the sacred history of Bhagirathi. When Pashupati was engaged in austerities with Parvati, Gods approached Brahma and asked for their commander-in-chief which the latter had previously promised. Then the lotus-born Brahma replied :

"The curse of Uma will not fail. Therefore, a son

from Fire will be born in the Mandakini, the celestial Ganges. That son will be your commander-in-chief. The elder sister Ganga will acknowledge the boy as her younger sister Uma's son, and he will be most dear to Uma. The gods then asked Fire to throw the energy of Pashupati into the Mandakini and the celestial stream assumed the form of a beautiful woman and bore the energy in her womb. Ganga being overwhelmed with that divine energy, cast it off near the Himalayas, at the words of Fire. As it came out of her it glittered like a mass of molten gold and in consequence of his exceeding lustre all objects near about were turned into gold and silver. Distant objects were turned into copper and iron, and its excreta lead. In this way various metals came into existence. My boy, gold is therefore, known as Jatarupa, because it derived its effulgence from another. As soon as the energy was cast, a son was born. Indra and other Gods said, "O Kirtika, this son will be called Kartikeya and will be famous in the three worlds." Kartikeya sucked (the breasts of) six stars—his six mothers, and thus Kartikeya was brought up. He is highly beautiful in person, and he conquered the Danavas by his might. O Rama ! who worships this Kartikeya, is blessed with longevity and with sons and grandsons, and he lives with him after death."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DESOERT OF THE GANGES

Maharshi Kaushika resumed, "A pious king named Sagara once ruled over Ayodhya. He had two wives named Keshini and Sumati. Keshini was the daughter of

the king of Bidharva, and Sumati of Maharshi Kashyapa. To obtain a son, king Sagara with his wives repaired to the Himalayas and began to do religious penance. Maharshi Bhrigu lived near that place. Sagara used to worship him. Saint Bhrigu was greatly pleased with Sagara and blessed him saying that he would obtain both fame and sons; and that one of his wives would deliver sixty thousand sons and the other only one. Then, after a length of time, the elder queen Keshini brought forth a son called Asamanja, and Sumati was delivered of a gourd, and when it burst open, out of it came sixty thousand sons of Sagara. These sons in time attained beauty and youth, and Asamanja got a son by the name of Angshumana—beloved by all men. Long after this, king Sagara thought of performing a sacrifice. The sacrifice was held in the region between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains. Prince Angshumana followed the sacrificial horse, but Vasava assuming the form of a Rakshasa stole away the horse. At this, the priests asked the king to bring back the horse, or else the sacrifice would be defective and it would bring misfortune. The king then asked his sixty thousand sons to search the whole world encircled by the oceans, and even to delve the earth to find out the horse. They then began to roam about the earth but failing to find out the horse they began to delve the earth several *yojanas* in length and breadth. The earth thus being cruelly rent sent forth loud groans. Thus the earth was dug for sixty thousand *yojanas*. The sons of Sagara dug all around Jambudwipa. Thereupon the Gods, the Asuras, Gandharvas and Pannagas appeared before Brahma and said how the sons of

Sagara were creating havoc for the sacrificial horse. The Grandsire then addressing them said, "Earth belongs to Vasudeva. As she is his wife, and assuming the form of Kapila, he always protects the earth, so the sons of Sagara will be destroyed by the wrath of Kapila."

"The Gods then departed rejoicing at Brahma's words.

"Having excavated the earth far and wide, the sons of Sagara returned to their father and reported of their failure in finding the horse. Sagara then asked his sons again to delve the earth. The sons then again rushed towards the depth of the earth. As they dug deeper and deeper they came across the elephant of the quarter called Virupaksha, huge like a mountain, holding the earth on its head. When this mighty elephant from fatigue shakes his head, then occurs earthquake ! They then penetrated the east and the south, and in the southern quarter they saw another mighty elephant named Mahapadma, holding the earth on its head. Likewise they beheld in the west the great elephant Sumanansa ; similarly, in the north they saw Bhadra, white as snow, holding the earth on him. Then Sagara's sons began to dig the north-eastern quarter¹ in rage, and they came across Vasudeva in the form of Kapila, and they found the sacrificial horse close by him. They then in their rage rushed towards Kapila, thinking that the latter had stolen the horse.

"At this, Kapila was greatly enraged and uttered a

¹ The site is now identified near the place where the Ganges falls into the sea.

terrible roar and the sons of Sagara were at once reduced to ashes.

"Seeing the delay of his sons, king Sagara asked his grandson Angshumana to search for them. Prince Angshumana after enquiries arrived at the spot where the sons of Sagara were reduced to ashes. He was overwhelmed with grief at the sad fate of his uncles and wished to offer oblations of water to them, but he found no water there. Then he saw Vinata's son Garuda, maternal uncle of the sons of Sagara. Garuda then addressing Angshumana said, "Do not lament. Their destruction was for the welfare of all creatures. They have been reduced to ashes by Kapila. So do not offer them water but perform their watery rites with the sacred water of Ganga. These ashes on being watered by Ganga, those sixty thousand sons will go to heaven. Therefore, go back with the sacrificial horse and complete the sacrifice of your grandfather."

"Mighty Angshumana then returned with the horse and narrated to the king everything faithfully. The king then finished the sacrifice in sorrow. The king after reigning for thirty thousand years ascended the heaven but he did not see who brought the sacred Ganga on earth.

"When Sagara was bowed with age, the people elected Angshumana to the throne. Angshumana proved to be a great ruler. Angshumana's son was the celebrated Dilip who was a great king. After conferring the kingdom on Dilip, king Angshumana retired to the Himalayas, where after practising religious austerities for thirty-two thousand years he ascended the heaven. Prince

Dilip was greatly mortified when he heard about the unnatural death of his ancestors and he became anxious for their salvation. After some time a son named Bhagirath was born to virtuous Dilip. Dilip died leaving the kingdom to Bhagirath after a reign of thirty thousand years.

"Pious Bhagirath was without any issue. In order to bring Ganga on earth Bhagirath practised severe austerities in the locality of Gokarna.

"At last, Brahma was pleased with his penance and appeared to grant him a boon. Bhagirath then said with folded hands, "If you are pleased to grant me a boon may Sagara's sons receive oblations of water from me, and their ashes be saved by the water of Ganga. May they thereby attain heaven."

Brahma replied, "O mighty Bhagirath, noble is thy end. Let your desire be fulfilled and good betide you. You ask for Hara's service for Ganga's fall, the earth won't be able to bear."

Bhagirath then prayed to Siva for a year. Pashupati then said to Bhagirath, "I have been pleased with you. I shall hold the mountain's daughter on my head." Then Ganga with great impetuous force precipitated herself from the sky on Siva's head. And Ganga thought of carrying away Sankara by her dash. At this Sankara grew angry and he thought of confining her. And O Rama! when Ganga fell on Rudra's tangled locks resembling the Himavat, in spite of her endeavours she could not disengage herself from the matted lock and reach the earth! She thus remained confined for many years. Bhagirath then again threw himself into severe austerities. Thereupon Siva was greatly

pleased and cast off Ganga towards the Vindu lake. As she was let loose, seven streams branched off from her. Three streams flowed towards the east while the Suchakshu, the Sita and the Sindhu followed Bhagirath's chariot. The royal saint went ahead and Ganga followed him. Then the celestials looked upon Ganga descending on earth. All in joy witnessed the descent of the Ganges as it followed the course of Bhagirath's car.

In her course, Ganga flooded the sacrificial ground of the great saint Jahnu. At this Jahnu drank her up in wrath. Thereupon the Gods and others began to pray to Jahnu. The saint being thus propitiated released Ganga through his ears. Therefore, Ganga is known as Jahnvi or Jahnu's daughter. Then Ganga again began to flow in the wake of Bhagirath's car and having reached the ocean she entered the subterranean region. And when the sacred waters of the Ganga overflowed the heaps of ashes of Sagara's sons, their sins were washed off and they at once attained heaven.

Then Brahma spoke to Bhagirath, "O most puissant of men! Sagara's sons have been delivered and they shall live for ever in heaven. This Ganga shall become your eldest daughter and be known as the Bhagirathi. She is also known as Tripathaga because she flew in three directions. Do thou now here offer oblations of water to your grandsires. Your mighty ancestors Angshumana and Dilip had failed to bring Ganga on earth. For having brought Ganga thou shalt also attain heavenly regions. Good betide thee."

Bhagirath then offered oblations to the sons of Sagara and returned again to his capital. O Rama, I have told you the story of Ganga's descent. Whoever recites this

sacred story attains the favour of his ancestors and Gods and whoever listens to it has all his desires fulfilled, his sins are removed and he attains longevity and fame.

They then passed their night on the bank of the Ganges.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE RISE OF NECTAR

On the following morning, they crossed the Ganges and reached the city of Vishala. Rama wanted to know something about the city. The great ascetic Viswamitra said, "O Rama, listen to what befell this city. In ancient times, in the Satya *yuga*, the sons of Diti and Aditi thought as to how they could be immortal and be free from disease and old age. Then it struck their minds that by churning the ocean of milk they would obtain Amrita or nectar. They then began to churn the ocean with the Mandara hill as the churning rod and Vasuki as the cord. After churning for thousand years the serpent Vasuki began to vomit virulent poison and bite the rock with its fangs. Thereupon rose a deadly poison like fire and began to scorch the whole universe. Then the Suras and the Asuras ran to great Sankara, crying, "Save us, save us, O Rudra!"

Then Hari appeared before Mahadeva and said. "As you are the foremost of the Gods, what has first come out of the ocean is due to thee. So receive the first offering in the form of poison."

Finding the Gods in distress, Siva drank the dreadful poison, as if it were nectar, then, leaving the Gods went away.

The celestials then resumed their churning. But after some time suddenly the Mandara hill began to sink into the subterranean region. Hrishikesa then assuming the form of a tortoise supported the hill on his back, and taking hold of the top of the hill by his hand began to churn the deep. Another thousand years elapsed. Then arose Dhanwantari, the father of medicines, bearing in his hands a stick and a *Kamandalu*. After him rose the beautiful damsels called Apsaras—so called because they emerged from water. As neither the Suras nor the Asuras accepted them, they became public wives. Then arose Varuni, the daughter of Varuna and the Goddess of wine (Sura) and she looked for acceptance. She was not accepted by the Diti's son, so they are called Asuras. And as Aditi's sons accepted her, they are known as the Suras. Then rose Uchchaisrava, the best of horses, and Kaustabha, the best of gems; and last rose Nectar. Then ensued a great fight over the Nectar between Aditi's and Diti's sons, and many Asuras were killed in the affray. In this havoc Vishnu appeared in the form of an exceedingly beautiful woman, stole away the nectar and destroyed Asuras who ran after him.

The sons of Diti thus being slain, Diti was greatly mortified with grief and prayed for the birth of a son for the destruction of Indra, and began to practise great austerities. As she was engaged in austerities, the thousand-eyed Indra attended on her and served her with great devotion and respect. Diti was greatly pleased with Indra and she said to him that after ten years she would deliver a son who would be a brother to Indra and not his foe. One day, when worshipful

Diti was sleeping in her bed. Indra cut the foetus in her womb into seven parts with his thunder. At this the foetus began to cry, at which Indra asked it to be silent saying, "Don't cry"—(Ma ruda). Diti then rose from sleep and said, "Don't kill it ; let the seven parts of the embryo be the guardian deities of the wind. They will be known as Marut, as you have said Ma ruda (Don't cry)." Hearing this, Indra bowed to Diti and worshipped her. This is the place where Indra attended on Diti. O Rama, powerful Ikshwaku had a son by the name of Vishala, this city of Vishala was built by him. Vishala's son is Hem Chandra. Hem Chandra's son Suchandra, and his sons were Srinjaya, Srinjaya's son was Sahadeva, his son Kushaswa and his son Somadatta now rules over the city.

Hearing of the arrival of Viswamitra and Rama, the king of Vishala welcomed them with great hospitality. Viswamitra narrated to him the object of their travel. After passing the night at Vishala they reached Mithila the next day. The ascetics were greatly delighted at the sight of Mithila. While surveying the city Rama witnessed an old, solitary, but beautiful hermitage.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AHALYA

Rama then asked, "O worshipful sir ! the hermitage looks like a deserted one. I wish to know all about this."

Viswamitra said, "This hermitage once belonged to the great saint Gautama. He used to practise austerities here with his wife Ahalya. One day when the

sage was absent, Indra the lord of Sachi, entered the hermitage in the guise of Gautama, and addressing Ahalya said, "O my enchanting beauty ! amorous ones do not wait for their monthly courses, so you satisfy my desire now."

Perverse Ahalya knowing that it was Indra who had come in the disguise of the ascetic, agreed to his proposal. After enjoyment Ahalya said to Indra, "My desire has been satisfied, now take me away from this place, and protect myself and yourself from the wrath of Gautama."

Indra replied, "I have been gratified, now let me go to my place."

With these words Indra through fear of the ascetic left the cottage with hurried steps. Thereafter the mighty sage Gautama, after bathing in the holy waters and after the performance of oblations, with Kusha grass and faggots in hand appeared before the cottage like a flame of fire. At his sight Indra's face darkened. Seeing Indra thus stealing away from his cottage in the garb of an ascetic he cursed him in anger, "Since you have enjoyed my wife assuming my form, you will be sexless." Addressing Ahalya, Gautama said, "You will live in the hermitage, unseen by others, your bed will be in ashes ; you will feed only on air ; and your remorse will be unbounded. Thus you will live for many thousand years. When Rama, the son of Dasaratha will come to this forest, you should minister unto him with the rites of hospitality without covetousness. Then you will be absolved from your sin, will get back your former form and will be re-united with me."

With these words Gautama left his hermitage and went to the Himalayas for meditation.

Indra with great trouble and with the help of the Gods got back his manhood after a long time.

Then Rama with Lakshmana entered Gautama's hermitage after Viswamitra, and found Ahalya had acquired greater beauty in consequence of asceticism, too dazzling to be gazed upon even by the Gods. It appeared as if the Creator with great care created this paragon of womanly beauty. She was wonderfully beautiful like a flame in the midst of smoke, like the full moon enveloped in mist, or like the glare of the Sun hidden behind the clouds. Ahalya remained concealed till the expiry of her curse. But as soon as she was absolved from it, she became visible to all. Rama and Lakshmana then bowed to her, but Ahalya remembering Gautama's words caught hold of their feet and offered them Arghya and water and received them with warm hospitality.

Then flowers were showered from above and Gods praised her for her piety. Maharshi Gautama came to know all this through his Yoga. He returned to his hermitage and began to practise religious penance with Ahalya with a cheerful heart.

CHAPTER XXXV

VISWAMITRA

Then Rama and Lakshmana with Viswamitra proceeded towards the north-east, and arrived at the sacrifice of Janaka. Rama was struck with the splendour of Janaka's sacrifice. Many Brahmanas and ascetics assembled there from various quarters.

When the royal saint Janaka heard of Viswamitra's arrival he hastened to receive him with his priest Satananda and other Brahmins versed in the Vedas and offering Arghya to Viswamitra said, "Today, by the grace of the gods my sacrifice has been crowned with success, since you have graced the occasion by your hallowed presence."

Janaka then respectfully asked Viswamitra, "Who are these two godlike youths, equipped with swords, bows and quivers? They appear mighty as gods! As the sun and the moon shine in the sky, so they have brightened up the place. There is great resemblance between the two. Whose sons are these raven-locked youths, and why have they undertaken such a tiresome journey?"

Viswamitra replied, "O king, they are the sons of king Dasaratha." Viswamitra then related all that happened in the journey, viz., the destruction of the Rakshasas, and the removal of Ahalya's curse.

Then the virtuous Satananda, the eldest son of Maharshi Gautama observed, "I am extremely grateful for (the news of) the removal of my mother's curse. Did she worship you with fruits and flowers? Did you accept my father's hospitality?"

Eloquent Viswamitra replied, "Nothing has been left undone. Your mother has been re-united with your father, like Renuka with Jamadagni."

Then Satananda addressing Rama said, "Since mighty Viswamitra, the foremost of the ascetics, is your protector, you are the most fortunate man in the three worlds. I shall now relate to you how this great ascetic

of wonderful deeds, Viswamitra, has attained highest Brahminhood.

In ancient time there was a king named Kusha. His son was Kushanabha. Kushanabha's son was Gadhi. This holy and mighty Viswamitra is Gadhi's son. This learned saint long ruled over his kingdom. Once upon a time this sage began to sojourn over the earth with his army. At length, the mighty conqueror Viswamitra reached the hermitage of Vasishtha, green with plants and trees, and adorned with fruits and flowers and visited by birds and deer. Pious ascetics lived in that holy hermitage; some of them lived only on water, some on air, some on leaves only; and some on roots and fruits. Viswamitra was greatly pleased at this sight. Viswamitra then went to Maharshi Vasishtha and enquired after his welfare. Then after mutual greetings sage Vasishtha pressed the king to accept his hospitality. Thereupon Viswamitra said that enough hospitality had already been shown by his kind words, but Vasishtha insisted upon Viswamitra's receiving his hospitality with his men and army. Viswamitra at last consented.

Sage Vasishtha then summoned his patri-coloured, sinless, sacrificial cow, Savala, and addressing her said, "The king with his army is my guest, so you entertain them with proper food and drink. You fulfil my desire and gratify them with all delicacies. Therefore, procure sufficient food without delay." At these words of Vasishtha, the cow Savala produced various eatables gratifying to the palate. She produced sugar-canes, fried rice, excellent wine called Gani, costly drinks, various kinds of food, rice, Payasa, soups, Dadhikulya

wine, and other palatable food with silver dishes (for serving to the guests). Viswamitra was greatly pleased at this hospitality, and after expressing his thanks he asked for the cow saying, "I shall give you a million of cows, please give your Savala in exchange of them. Your sacrificial cow is indeed a rare gem. The king by right is entitled to all gems, so you confer this Savala on me. According to law I am entitled to it."

At this Vasishtha said, "I cannot part with Savala for millions and millions of cows, nor for all the gold and silver you propose to offer. This cow follows me like the reputation of a noble man. I live by her and I perform my sacrifices with her help. I tell you sincerely Savala is my everything. Its very sight fills me with joy. Therefore, I cannot give you the cow."

Viswamitra then again implored for the cow and promised him rich provinces, thousands of elephants, horses, golden chariots and various kinds of jewels in exchange. But Vasishtha again stoutly refused. Viswamitra finding the ascetic thus unyielding then took the cow forcibly. Then the cow thought with tears, "Has the saint really forsaken me? Why the royal servants drag me thus!"

Then Savala tore herself off from the king's servants and ran to Vasishtha and said, "Have you forsaken me? Royal servants are taking me away by force!"

Vasishtha then sorrowfully answered, "No Savala, I have not forsaken you. You have done no harm to me. The king is taking you by force from me. My power is not equal to his might. Look, he has elephants, horses, chariots and a vast army. He is a Kshatriya

and a ruler of the earth. Moreover, he is my guest and it is not proper to injure the guest."

Then Savala humbly said, "O saint, Kshatriya's power is of course much, but greater is the might of a Brahmana ; the power of a Brahmin is supernatural and it exceeds that of a Kshatriya. Though Viswamitra is exceedingly powerful, yet he is not a match for you. I can work wonders like Brahman. Please permit me, I shall baffle all the attempts of this wicked king and humble his pride to the dust."

Vasishtha then told Savala to produce soldiers to destroy Viswamitra's army. Savala then produced (by her supernatural powers) a number of Palhavas by her lowing. And Viswamitra began to destroy those Palhavas in rage. At this Savala produced the terrible Yavanas along with the Sakas.¹ They were formidable in power and were armed with sharp swords and axes. They were yellow-coloured and were clad in yellow dress. Viswamitra in great rage began to hurl weapons at them. Thereupon the Yavanas, the Kambojeans and the Barbarians became sorely afflicted.

Then Savala again created a fresh army. From her thundering roars came into existence the Kambojeans, resplendent as the sun ; from her udder sprang the Barbarians ; from her private parts came the Yavanas ; from her anus the Sakas ; from the pores of her hairs sprang the Haritas and the Kiratas. These soldiers began to destroy Viswamitra's army.

At this hundred sons of Viswamitra with their

¹ This accounts for the origin of the different races of people who clashed with the Indians in later times.

weapons rushed towards Vasishtha. At this Vasishtha uttered a terrific roar and all the sons of Viwamitra were reduced to ashes. Seeing his sons thus destroyed Viswamitra was overwhelmed with shame. He then returned to his capital with a broken heart and after installing the only surviving son on the throne, repaired to the Himalayas and began to practise great austerities to please Byomkesha to ask for a boon.

After a length of time, God Mahadeva appeared. Viswamitra then asked for a bow and arrows with their mysterious Mantras. Being thus endowed with divine arms Viswamitra again in haughtiness attacked Vasishtha's hermitage. At the approach of Viswamitra, the ascetics living in that forest began to run away in fear, though Vasishtha assured them and asked them to stop. Viswamitra then hurled his formidable weapon against Vasishtha. But Vasishtha in rage destroyed all his arms and defeated him. Viswamitra was thus vanquished by Brahminical power. "Shame on Kshatriya's power. I must anyhow attain Brahminhood."

Great Viswamitra was deeply mortified at this defeat. Then having resolved to perform severe austerities, he repaired to the south with his queen. There he passed his days in religious meditations living on fruits and roots. During that period four sons called Habispanda, Madhuspanda, Drihanetra and Maharatha were born to him. Thus thousand years rolled off, then Brahma—the grandsire of all created beings—appeared and said, "O king ! you will be counted as a royal saint, and henceforward you will be known as a Rajarshi."

Then Viswamitra hung down his head in shame and

thought, "Even after such austerities the gods consider me only as a Rajarshi. I shall, therefore, practise more severe austerities to attain Brahminhood." Having thus resolved he again engaged himself in severe penance.

At that time, king Trisanku of Ikshwaku's line thought of performing a sacrifice in order to attain heaven in his material body, and spoke about it to Vasishtha. But Vasishtha refused to perform the ceremony, as the idea was absurd. At this king Trisanku approached Vasishtha's sons and asked them to help him by performing the sacrifice.

But Vasishtha's sons grew angry at this and cursed him saying that he would become a *Chandala*. And when the night was over the king attained Chandahood. He became as dark as blue, his skin grew rough, his hair grew short, his body was besmeared with ashes, and he wore a garland of dirty chips collected from the cremation ground. Finding the king thus reduced to a Chandala his ministers and followers ran away from him. Trisanku then went to Viawamitra. Seeing the king thus reduced to such a miserable plight, Viswamitra was moved with pity and enquired about him. Trisanku then related how instead of attaining the object of his desire he had met with such dire calamity, and he concluded saying, "O best of ascetics ! intending to perform a sacrifice I have failed to enlist the sympathy of my spiritual preceptor. I do now find that Fate is always supreme, valour is nothing. Destiny overtakes all. Therefore, grant thy favour on him whose all endeavours have been frustrated by Fate. I have no other refuge."

Having heard these words of the king, Viswamitra's heart was moved with pity and he took up his cause. Saint Viswamitra then asked his pupils to bring all the ascetics and saints together including Vasishtha's sons. But Madodaya and other sons of Vasishtha said, "How can Gods and Rishis take part in the sacrifice of him who is a Chandala and has a Kshatriya for his priest?" Hearing this from his disciples, Viswamitra inflamed in rage, uttered a terrible curse that those insolent sons would be reduced to ashes and for seven hundred births would roam over the world feeding on dog's flesh and gathering dead man's cloths. They would be known as Musthikas despicable and of wicked practices; then addressing the assembled hermits Viswamitra said, "This descendant of Ikshwaku is virtuous and generous. He has come to me for shelter. He wants to go to Heaven with his mortal body. So please be engaged with me in the sacrifice." The sacrifice then began and Viswamitra after a length of time invoked all the Gods to receive their shares of the sacrifice but the celestials refused to come. Thereupon Viswamitra waxed angry and said to Trisanku, "O Lord of men! I shall by the power of my asceticism send you bodily to the heaven and through my virtue you now ascend the heaven."

At these words, Trisanku began to ascend bodily into heaven. Seeing Trisanku, thus ascending into heaven, Indra said, "O Trisanku, go back. You have been cursed by your spiritual guide, therefore, fall headlong from it." Trisanku then began to fall headlong from heaven, crying unto Viswamitra, "O, save me." Hearing this distressful cries, sage Viswamitra cried in wrath, "Stop." And then like a second Praja-

pati he created another constellation of the seven Rishis and other stars in the southern sky. "I shall create another Indra," exclaimed Viswamitra in rage, "or the world will be without an Indra." Thereupon, the gods and the saint humbly said, "O high-exalted sage, this king has been cursed by his preceptor, so he doesn't deserve to ascend the heaven in mortal frame."

Viswamitra then replied, "O Gods, I have promised to send Trisanku to heaven in person. I can't prove false to my vow. So either Trisanku must dwell in heaven in person or the stars created by me will ever continue to exist."

The gods then said, "Let it be so. The stars created by you will shine in the sky outside the Zodiac circle, and Trisanku with bent head will live there like an immortal, and all these luminous bodies shall follow Trisanku as if he has attained heaven." Virtuous Viswamitra agreed to this. After the Gods were gone Viswamitra addressing the ascetics said, "Lo! an interruption to penance has been created by Trisanku in the south. So let us repair to the west and carry on our rites in the sacred pilgrimage of Pushkara." Viswamitra then went to the west and began to practise great austerities. By that time Ambarisha, the king of Ayodhya, was performing a sacrifice, and Indra at the time of sacrifice stole away the sacrificial animals. At this, his priest told the king either to secure those animals or purchase a man in their stead. Then Ambarisha went in search of those animals and arrived at the hills of Bhrgutunga. There he found the son of Maharshi Richika with his wife and children, and after stating everything he asked for a son of his, and promised him millions of cows in

exchange. At this Richika replied, "O king, I cannot sell the eldest in any way." Then his wife said, The youngest is my darling, I can't part with him." Hearing the parents thus speak, the second son Shunashefa said, "Father is not willing to sell the eldest, mother doesn't want to dispose off the youngest; it, therefore, seems that I am the only saleable son, so you take me with you."

Ambarisha then took him in his chariot by giving millions of cows and sufficient gold.

At midday, king Ambarisha reached Pushkara. There Shunashefa found his maternal uncle Viswamitra engaged in meditation. At his sight Shunashefa afflicted with thirst and hunger, begged Viswamitra to give him shelter. Then Viswamitra assured him and asked his own sons to assume the forms of the sacrificial animals in order to save the hermit's son from Ambarisha. At this Viswamitra's sons tauntingly remarked, "You want to save another's son at the cost of your own ones! It is as good as to feed upon one's own flesh out of commiseration towards other creatures." At this Viswamitra grew angry and cursed his own sons as he did the sons of Vasishtha. Then addressing Shunashefa Viswamitra said, "You now put on a zone of Kasha grass, a garland of red flowers, besmear your body with red sandal and pray to Agni close to the Vaishnavi sacrificial stake. I give you two hymns which you should chant at the time of Ambarisha's sacrifice and your life will be saved."

Shunashefa then with a devoted heart took those Vedic Gathas (songs)

When Ambarisha arrived with Shunashefa, Shunashefa like a sacrificial animal was tied to the sacrificial

post. Shunashefa then began to chant those Vedic hymns and to pray to Indra, Agni and Vishnu. Indra was then pleased with Shunashefa. He blessed him with a long life, and thus Shunashefa was saved.

After thus saving Shunashefa's life, Viswamitra again engaged himself in deep meditation and severe austerities at Pushkara. After a lapse of time Brahma appeared and said, "From this time you will be reckoned as a saint." But Viswamitra continued his rigid austerities. At one time the heavenly nymph Menaka was bathing in the sacred waters of Pushkara. Viswamitra was bewitched by her fascinating beauty and took her to his hermitage. Viswamitra passed ten years with Menaka, but it soon became evident to him that his penance had been broken. He was then stung with remorse and shame and thought that it was a deep-laid game of the Gods. Menaka was greatly frightened by the saint's change and stood before him in folded hands. But Viswamitra assured her in sweet words and commenced his austerities again. Brahma again appeared before him and greeted him as Maharshi. Then Viswamitra respectfully said, "You have not confirmed on me Brahminhood because I have not as yet succeeded in conquering my senses." Brahma replied, "If your mind be not disturbed even in presence of temptations you will know that you have subdued your senses. Therefore strive after that."

Then Viswamitra again commenced severe austerities. He prayed with uplifted arms feeding on air ; in summer, he surrounded himself with five fires ; in rains, he remained in uncovered place ; and in winter day

and night he stood immersed in water. Thus passed thousand years.

Thereupon Indra, the king of Gods, was greatly alarmed by the austerities of the great sage and planning some mischief of Viswamitra he summoned Rambha before him. Rambha pleaded to be excused for she dared not disturb the penance of the Rishi. Indra then encouraged her saying that Cupid and Spring would help her in her mission. Then the beautiful nymph, Rambha, descended on earth and began to sing rapturous songs in accompaniment of cuckoo's notes. Viswamitra was, at first, greatly delighted at hearing this, but he immediately saw through the deep game of Indra and he cursed Rambha in extreme rage, condemning her to be turned into marble and remain as such for ten thousand years. Unfortunate Rambha was turned into stone and Indra and Cupid ran away in fear. But Viswamitra was struck with remorse for thus losing his temper. He found that for his lust and anger he could not attain his object. He then left his northern quarters and came to the east, and engaged himself in severer austerities and was absorbed in meditation. He remained listless and silent like a hillock for thousand years. Then after the expiry of a thousand years he wished to break his fast and he was about to take his food. Indra came in the disguise of a Brahmin and asked for food. Sage Kaushika willingly gave him all and remained himself without any food. Viswamitra then suspended his breath and again plunged himself in meditation for thousand years.

Then all the celestials and other immortals approached Brahma and said, "The world will be scorched

by the fire of his penance unless his prayer is granted. Even the kingdom of Heaven must be given to him if he wants it, or the creation will be destroyed."

Then Brahma and other Gods appeared before Viswamitra and said, "We have been greatly pleased with your penance. You have attained Brahmanhood by penance. You will live long and from this day you are a Brahmana." Viswamitra then said, "If I have attained Brahmanhood in truth, together with longevity, let myself be duly acknowledged by Omkar and Bashatkar and the Vedas and by Vasishtha, Brahman's son, the foremost amongst those learned in the Vedas and in the Dhanur Vidya (science of wielding bows) or I shall again devote myself to meditation and penance."

Then at the request of the Gods friendship was struck between Vasishtha and Viswamitra and the Gods in a body declared Viswamitra a Brahman. Thus Viswamitra attained Brahmanhood. He is the foremost of the Rishis and is like the embodiment of religion itself.

Thus said Satananda. King Janaka then expressed his gratitude for Viswamitra's presence in his sacrifice and accorded him warm hospitality.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GREAT BOW

On the following morning, after greeting Maharshi Kaushika with Rama and Lakshmana, Janaka said,

1 Viswamitra—like Vasishtha, a great Vedic Rishi and is the author of many famous hymns and Mantras of the Rig Veda.

"Tell me now what is your pleasure. I am at your command."

Viswamitra replied, "These two famous Kshatriya princes want to see the formidable bow kept in your palace. Be pleased to show it to them."

Janaka then said, "Please, first of all listen to the history of the bow. In ancient times, at the time of Daksha's sacrifice, the God Siva in wrath wanted to destroy the Gods for depriving him his due share of the sacrifice. The Gods then in fear began to pray to Siva to appease his wrath. Siva then being pacified by their prayers made over the bow to the Gods. The Gods then gave the bow as a trust to my forefather king Devarata, the eldest son of Nimi. Since that time the bow is with us.

"One day, as I was ploughing the ground for sacrifice, at the time of the turning of the ploughshare I found a girl, and as I got her in clearing the field for sacrifice, I have named her Sita.¹ This earth-born child has been brought up in my house as my daughter. I have made this vow that I shall marry her to him who will be able to put string to this bow of Hara. In course of time Sita has attained her marriageable age. Many kings and princes came to sue for her hand, but since valour is her marriage-dowry I have not conferred her on any one of them. Kings came to inspect the Hara's bow and I also showed them the bow, but they could neither raise the bow nor put string to it. The kings and princes at their discomfiture grew angry and they in a body besieged Mithila for carrying away my

¹ Sita means a furrow. As she was found out when ploughing the ground for sacrifice, she was called Sita.

daughter by force. I resisted them from inside the fortress for about a year, after which my resources were at an end. I became greatly despondent at this and prayed to the Gods. Then the Gods, in their mercy, gave me an army. I then again renewed my fight with the kings, and, at the end, those wicked princes ran away from the field after sustaining a heavy defeat. I shall now show that eventful bow to Rama and Lakshmana, and if Rama can put string to that bow, I shall confer my daughter on him." Then Maharshi Kaushika asked Janaka to point out the bow to Rama.

Then Janaka ordered his counsellors and men to bring that Siva's bow, adorned with garlands and sandal-paste. The bow was placed in an iron box on an eight-wheeled carriage. It was drawn with difficulty by hundreds of stalwart men.

Then Janaka said, "This bow was worshipped by my forefathers. Not to speak of man, even the celestials cannot raise the bow or put string to it."

Then Kaushika said to Rama, "My child, behold the bow"

Rama then taking out the lid of the case saw the bow and examined it with his hand. He then asked what he would do with the bow. Would he raise it and bend it then and there? On Janaka's and the sage's replying in the affirmative, Rama, at ease, took up the bow and began to bend it in order to put a string to it and the bow was broken into two pieces with a thundering crash, and the whole place shook as if in an earthquake. And all, except Viswamitra, Janaka, Rama and Lakshmana, fell unconscious on the ground!

Then all doubts about Janaki's marriage were removed from Janaka's heart.

Janaka then addressing Viswamitra in folded hands said. "I have witnessed the prowess and valour of Dasaratha's son Rama. It is an astonishing feat. I never dreamt that such a thing could happen. Now my family will be famous by the union of Sita with Rama. Now my promise has been fulfilled and I want to marry Sita to Rama. So please permit me to send envoys to Ayodhya and fetch king Dasaratha with due honours and respect, and also to send him the news that Rama and Lakshmana are safe."

Viswamitra gave his assent. Janaka then summoned his men and sent them to Ayodhya with a letter communicating everything therein.

The envoys of Janaka reached Ayodhya after great fatigue passing three nights in their journey.

Then they were admitted before the king by the sentries. Appearing before king Dasaratha who looked like an immortal, they began in a sweet and gentle voice. "My lord, Janaka, the king of Mithila, with his counsellors and priests repeatedly enquires after the welfare of you and of your staff and followers. And with Kaushika's permission the king of Mithila addresses you thus. "You know the vow that I took formerly, that is, to confer my daughter on him who would succeed in bending the bow, which had baffled the efforts of so many kings previously. But that daughter of mine has been won by your son, who has arrived here with Viswamitra. O mighty king, that heavenly bow has been broken into two pieces in the presence of a large assembly of people. I shall confer

on high-souled Rāma my Sita, and in this way I wish to be absolved from my vow, for which I crave your kind permission. You therefore, be good enough to arrive here speedily with your priests. It behoves you to see me absolved from my vow, and also witness the marriage of your sons. Thus the lord of Videha, permitted by Viswamitra, asked us to communicate to you."

Hearing these words of the envoys, Dasaratha was exceedingly glad and readily consented to the proposal, at which all praised the king for his decision. The king then cheerfully said, "Our journey begins even from tomorrow."

When the night was over, Dasaratha spoke to Sumantra, "Let the officers in charge of the royal treasury take plenty of money and jewels, and start in advance under proper escort. Let the army march. Let Vasishtha, Vamdeva, Javali, Kasyapa, Markandeya, Katyayana and other Brahmanas start on horseback or in palanquins. Janaka's envoys asked me to start quickly ; you, therefore, yoke the horses to my chariot."

King Dasaratha then started after due preparations and his army followed him in march. After four days' journey all arrived at Mithila.

On Dasaratha's arrival Janaka after according him a warm welcome said, "Had you a safe journey ? It is my good luck that has brought you here. Now you enjoy the pleasure of seeing your two sons married. I am also grateful for Maharshi Vasishtha's presence, surrounded by the priests as Indra by the Gods. Now to my good luck all obstacles in the path of my daughter's marriage have been removed. I feel myself fortunate

in having an alliance with the line of Raghu. Tomorrow morning after the completion of the sacrifice you perform the marriage ceremony along with the saints and priests."

Dasaratha said, "I have heard that a gift should be ratified by acceptance. So what you say will be accomplished."

Then they passed the night merrily. Next morning, Janaka said to his priest Satananda, that he wanted to have his brother Kushadhwaja living in the city of Sankadhya, standing on the banks of Ikshumati with its ramparts guarded with pointed weapons, to come and join in the ceremony. Competent persons were then sent to fetch Kushadhwaja, who also soon came to Videha at the mandate of Janaka.

CHAPTER XXXVII

RAMA'S MARRIAGE

Highly effulgent Janaka and his brother Kushadhwaja, after having taken their seats, asked minister Sudamana to fetch king Dasaratha with his sons and counsellors with all the honour due to their high rank. Sudamana then went to Dasaratha's camp and invited him to come to Janaka's court, whereupon king Dasaratha with his priests and counsellors went there. Dasaratha then addressing Janaka said, "Sage Vasishtha is our family priest. With the permission of Maharshi Viswamitra and other sages he will narrate to you the geneology of my line."

Then Vasishtha began, "O king ! from the Eternal Brahma who is beyond the range of human perception and stands above all proofs or inference, has come the

indestructible God Brahman. Brahman's son is Marichi. Kashyapa was born of Marichi; Kashyapa's son is Vivaswat. Manu was born of Vivaswat and this Manu is known as Prajapati. Manu's son was Ikshwaku. This Ikshwaku was the first king of Ayodhya. Ikshwaku had a son named Kukshi. Kukshi's son was Vikukshi, and Vikukshi's son was mighty Vana. Vana's son was Anaranya. Anaranya's son was Prithu and Prithu's son was Trisanku. Trisanku had a son called Dhundhumar who was a famous king. Dhundhumar's son was Yuvanashwa, and Yuvanashwa's son was Mandhata. Mandhata's son was Susandhi. Susandhi had two sons, Dhruvasandhi and Prasanjit. Famous Bharata was born of Dhruvasandhi. Bharata's son was Asita. Haihayas, Talajanghas and Sasavindas rose against Asita and defeated and crushed Asita who fled to the Himalayas with his two queens and he died after some time. It is said that both of his queens were pregnant and each of the queens administered poison to the other to destroy the foetus. In that mountain lived sage Chyaban, son of Bhrigu. Asita's wife Kalindi went to saint Bhargava and prayed for the birth of a son. Bhargava was pleased and said that a mighty and beautiful son would be born along with poison.

"Kalindi was a widow and in due time delivered a beautiful boy along with the poison that had been administered by her co-wife. The boy was named Sagara as he was born with poison. Sagara's son was Asamanja, Asamanja's son was Angshumana. Angshumana's son was Dilip and Dilip's son was Bhagirath. Bhagirath's son was Kakustha and Kakustha's son was Raghu. Raghu's son was Provindha. He was turned to

a carnivorous Rakshasa. He was afterwards known as Kalmashpada. Kalmashpada's son was Sankhana. Sankhana's son was Sudarsana and Sudarsana's son was Agnivarna. Agnivarna's son was Shighraga; and Shighraga's son was Maru. Maru's son was Proshusruka, and Proshusruka's son was Ambarisha.

"Nabusha was born of Ambarisha, and Nabusha's son was Yayati; Yayati's son Nabhaga and Nabhaga's son was Aja¹ and Aja's son is king Dasaratha. Rama and Lakshmana are the sons of king Dasaratha. They are truthful, virtuous and mighty and for them we solicit your two daughters. You bestow your daughters on worthy bridegrooms."

After Vasishtha's word, king Janaka in folded palms said, "At the time of daughter's marriage it is the duty of a person born in a noble family to speak of his ancestry. So kindly listen to the geneology of my line. There ruled a mighty king named Nimi. Nimi's son was Mithi, and Mithi's son was Janaka and from him all the descendants born in our line are called Janaka. Janaka's son was Udavasu. Udavasu's son was Nandivardhana and his son was Suketu. Suketu's son was Devarata. Devarata's son was Vrihadratha, and his son was Sudhriti, and Sudhriti's son was virtuous Dhristaketu. Dhristaketu's son was Haryashwa. Haryashwa's son was Maru, Maru's son was Pratindhaka. Pratindhaka's son was Kitiratha, and his son was Devamirha. Devamirha's son was Vivudha. Vivudha's son was Mahidhraka. Mahidhraka's son was Kirtirata, and

¹ Kalidas gives a different geneology. He says Dilip's son was Raghu. Raghu's son was Aja and Aja's son was Dasaratha.

Kirtirata's son was Maharoman. Maharoman's son was Swarnaroman and his son was Hraswaroman. He had two sons, eldest of the two is myself and the younger is my brother Kushadhwaja. Our aged father after making over the kingdom and Kushadhwaja to my care retired to the forest where he laid down his mortal frame. After his demise I am now looking after the kingdom.

"After some time a powerful king named Sudhanwa came from Sankshya and demanded the bow of Hara and Janaki, which I refused. Then there was a heavy fight between him and myself, in which Sudhanwa was killed and defeated. After Sudhanwa's death I have installed my heroic brother Kushadhwaja to the throne of Sankshya. Now I shall confer my two daughters in a contented mind—nymph-like beautiful Sita on Rama and my second daughter Urmila on Lakshmana. Do thou O king, perform the ceremony of Godana and offer oblations to the manes of your ancestors for Rama and Lakshmana's marriage. Today the inauspicious star Magha is in the ascendant, on the third day the marriage will be celebrated under the auspices of the Uttara Phalguni star. Now for the future good of Rama and Lakshmana, give away in charity cattle and gold."

Then Saint Viswamitra with Vasishtha's leave said, "No other clan can be compared with that of Ikshwaku or Videha. This union between Rama and Sita and Lakshmana and Urmila is desirable in every respect. Now I have something to say, please listen to my words. Your virtuous brother Kushadhwaja has got two beautiful daughters; we solicit them for Bharata and Satrugna. All the sons of king Dasaratha are

handsome and valiant as the Gods. So do not hesitate for a moment." At these words, king Janaka addressing Viswamitra and Vasishtha in clasped hands said, "I consider my family honoured, since you mighty sages wish for such an alliance. Let, therefore, the daughters of Kushadhwaja be married to Bharata and Satrugna. Day after tomorrow is an auspicious day for marriage as the Uttar Phalguni star will then be on the ascendant." Then addressing saint Vasishtha Janaka observed that like king Dasaratha henceforward he and his brother should also be counted as disciples of Vasishtha."

King Dasaratha was immensely pleased with Janaka's words and after good wishes he repaired to his camp to perform Sraddha rites of his ancestors. On the following morning, king Dasaratha performed the Godana (gift of cows) ceremony by giving away four lakhs of cows with their horns covered with gold, each with a calf and a bell-metal vessel for milking her.

On the day of Godana ceremony, Bharata's maternal uncle, Yudhajit, son of Kekaya, appeared before Dasaratha and informed him that he had come to see Bharata, failing to find him in Ayodhya. King Dasaratha warmly received the honourable guest.

On the following morning, Dasaratha headed by the priests and saints entered the sacrificial ground. Then in the auspicious moment called Vijaya, Rama appeared accompanied by his brothers, adorned with various ornaments with saintly Vasishtha and other sages who had all performed the rites appertaining to the marriage.

Then Vasishtha coming to Janaka informed him that king Dasaratha after performing the pre-nuptial rites was waiting at the gate with his sons. At this Vaideha

said, "How is it that the king is waiting at the gate for his permission? He can easily enter his own house. O great sage! my daughters after performing all the auspicious rites pertaining to the marriage, are waiting at the foot of the altar like flames of fire, and I have been expecting you every moment. Now perform ceremony without delay."

Dasaratha, then, entering with his sons and Vasishtha spoke to Videha, "O master, now perform the marriage ceremony of Rama, the darling of all." Then Vasishtha with Satananda and Viswamitra constructed an altar according to the injunctions of the Shastras. It was decked all round with scented flowers and painted water-pots, with ears of barley attached to them, golden ladles, sprays, cups and censers with incense burning in them, conchs, spoons, wreaths, vases, Arghyas, fried paddy and *akshatas* dyed with turmeric juice, were arranged round the dias. Vasishtha with *mantras* spread Durvas (grass) of equal length on the altar. Then he duly lighted the sacrificial fire and made offerings to it. Then bringing Sita richly adorned with ornaments and jewels, and placing her before Rama and the sacrificial fire, king Janaka said, "O Rama! Sita is my daughter and from this day she becomes your partner in life. Take her by the hand - good betide you. Let her be chaste and devoted, and she will follow you like your own shadow." Saying this, Janaka spread holy waters sanctified by *mantras* upon Rama's hand. The Gods and saints praised the union. Kettle-drums began to be played and flowers were profusely showered.

After conferring Sita on Rama, addressing Laksh-

mana, Janaka said, "Come forward, O Lakshmana, accept Urmila and take her by the hand." Then addressing Bharata, Janaka said, "O Bharata, you accept Mandavi," and to Satrughna he said, "You take Srutakirty. Do not delay and be united with your wives."

Then the four sons of Dasaratha taking the hands of the four brides in their own, went round the sacrificial fire on the altar, with king Janaka and other saints. The marriage ceremony was thus performed. Heavenly music was heard from above and flowers were showered from the sky. Then Dasaratha's sons went round the fire three times and afterwards with their wives retired to their camps.

On the following morning, saint Viswamitra after greeting Dasaratha and Janaka repaired to the Himalayas. King Dasaratha too, made arrangements for returning to Ayodhya. King Janaka then gave many thousand cows and a number of fine blankets, heaps of silken cloths, well-adorned elephants, horses, infantry as guards of honour, and profuse gold, silver, pearls, ruby (corals) as dowries to his daughters. He also gave hundreds of servants and maids of honour to each of his daughters.

Then Dasaratha with his sons and armies started for Ayodhya. After some time the birds began to utter fierce cries in the sky and the beasts on the land began to proceed towards the south. At this ominous sign Dasaratha asked Vasishta what it indicated, and his heart was trembling with dark apprehensions. Vasishta assured him that the cries of the birds were ominous, but the direction in which the beasts were going was assuring of peace. When they were thus engaged in

conversation, suddenly a furious storm broke out, and it uprooted mighty trees by its violence. The sun was hidden in utter darkness.

Nothing could be seen in that pitch darkness. Soldiers were blinded by a cloud of dust and began to stumble on the ground.

At that hour only saint Vasishtha and other sages and king Dasaratha with his sons retained their composure.

At that moment, the Destroyer of the Kshatriyas, the son of Bhrigu, Jamadagni, with matted locks and axe on his shoulder, holding in his hands sharp arrows and a shining bow appeared on the spot like Byomkesa, slayer of Tripura Asura. King Dasaratha saw Jamadagni, unassailable as the Kailas mountain, unbearable as the Doomsday-fire burning with his own fire and incapable of being looked at by the unrighteous.

At his sight, Vasishtha and other Brahmins talked amongst themselves, "Would the son of Bhrigu enraged at the death of his father again exterminate the Kshatriyas? Would he again be engaged in the act of destruction?"

The Rishis then greeted the son of Jamadagni with Arghyas and sweet words. Rama too accepted their offerings of worship.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

RAMA AND PARASHURAMA

Parashurama then addressing Rama, the son of Dasaratha, said, "I have heard of thy valour and also about the breaking of the bow, I have, therefore, come hither with another bow. First of all, give proof of

your strength by fixing arrow to this formidable bow of my ancestors. If you succeed in that I shall fight duel with you."

Then king Dasaratha with a sad look said, "You are Brahmana, your wrath has amply been gratified by destroying the Kshatriyas, so please do not threaten the boys. You are born in the virtuous line of the Bhargavas, given to the observance of vows and the study of the Vedas. You have renounced arms with a vow in presence of Indra, and adopting a life of renunciation you have conferred the Earth on Kashyapa and retired to the Mahendra hill. Now have you come for my ruin, for if any untoward thing happens to Rama I shall surely die?"

But without paying heed to Dasaratha's words the son of Jamadagni addressing Rama said :

"These two formidable bows have been made by Viswakarma with great care. One of the two at the time of the destruction of Tripura Asura, the Gods gave it unto Tramvaka. But, O Kakustha, you have snapped that into two. The second one was given to Vishnu.

"Once upon a time the Gods wanted to ascertain who was more powerful between Vishnu and Siva, and with that intent they fomented a quarrel between the two. Then there took place a formidable contest between the two. Then Vishnu uttered a roar which rendered the bow of Siva quite soft and useless, and thereupon Mahadeva remained inert and listless.

"Gods then acknowledged Vishnu as the more powerful of the two, and they prayed for peace at which the contending Gods were pacified. Then Rudra

made over the bow to Rajarshi Devarat of Videha. This bow of Vishnu was made over to Bhrigu's son Rishika, and Rishika gave it to my father Jamadagni. And when my father renounced that bow, sinful Arjuna, the ruler of Haihai, killed my father. Hearing of this sad death of my father I destroyed the Kshatriyas in anger. Then after conquering the whole world, I gave it to Kashyapa as Dakshina¹ after the sacrifice. Having made this gift, I repaired to the Mahendra hill but hearing of your snapping of the Siva's bow, I have directed my steps hither. O Rama, you are conversant with the code of Kshatriya gallantry. You take this excellent bow and put on shafts to it and if you succeed I shall fight a duel with you."

Hearing these words, Rama on account of his father's presence, gently said, "O hero! I have heard of your heroic exploits to avenge your father's death. Honourable revenge is worthy of a hero and so I acknowledge your valour. But I am a Kshatriya and you have insulted me by regarding me weak. I shall not brook this. Thou shalt witness my prowess today"

Saying this, Rama in anger took up Bhrigu's bow together with the arrows and then fixing a shaft in the bow addressing Jamadagni's son said, "You are a Brahmana and especially for Viswamitra you are an object of my respect I, therefore, refrain from aiming this fatal shaft at you. Of the two alternatives—your aerial course or the high state attained by your asceticism—tell me which one shall I destroy?"

1. Dakshina—a priest's due who officiates in any sacrifice.

Seeing the bow in Rama's hand the celestials assembled in the sky to witness his wonderful trial of strength and in their presence Jamadagni's power passed to Rama. At this Jamadagni became powerless and kept steadily eyeing Rama.

Then Parashurama gently said, "When I gave away the Earth to Kashyapa, he told me to remain no longer in his dominions. According to those words since then I have never spent a night on Earth. O Kakustha, therefore, you should not destroy my unrestrained power of locomotion. I shall now retire to the Mahendra hill. You destroy with that arrow the regions I have acquired by my asceticism. The moment you have taken up the bow I have recognised you to be the Purushottama himself, the indestructible Vishnu. May good betide you. You are matchless in the world. You are the Lord of the three worlds. There is nothing to be ashamed of at my defeat in your hands. You withdraw that formidable shaft and let me repair to the Mahendra hill."

At these words, Rama shot the arrow and it destroyed the regions earned by Parashurama's austerities. The whole sky then at once became clear. The celestials and saints praised Rama for his valour. Parashurama honoured Rama by going round him and then went towards the Mahendra hill.

After Jamadagni's departure Rama made over the Vaishnavi bow to Varuna, the Lord of water, and addressing his father, stupefied with fear, said, "Father ! Jamadagni is gone, so let our army now march towards Ayodhya."

King Dasaratha was greatly relieved at these words,

and he, embracing Rama in affection, smelt his head again and again, and considered the whole thing as a second birth after death.

King Dasaratha then reached Ayodhya with his army. The streets of Ayodhya were watered and decked with beautiful floral decorations and banners and flagstuffs, and began to be resounded with the notes of trumpets. Citizens were standing with auspicious things in their hands. There were immense crowds everywhere. Every face brightened at the sight of the king.

Then the citizens and the Brahmanas flocked out of the city to receive the king and Dasaratha entered his favourite palace, snow-white as the Himalayas. Then the queens—Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi, with auspicious ceremonies, received the brides clad in silk and sanctified by sacrificial fire. They took the brides inside the palace and made them bow to the household deities and to persons deserving respect.

After the auspicious rites and reception were over, the brides retired to seclusion and enjoyed there the company of their husbands.

The sons of Dasaratha then with their wives passed their days in the service of their father.

After some time, one day, king Dasaratha said to Bharata that his maternal uncle Yudhajit had come to Ayodhya to take him to the place of the king Kekayas. At this Bharata together with Satrughna departed for their maternal uncle's house with Yudhajit.

After the departure of Bharata and Satrughna, Rama, with utmost regard to the wishes of his father always in his heart, did welfare of the people ; and at

his instance various good works were done to the public. Following the injunctions of the Shastras Rama observed all the duties due to his mothers and other superiors.

King Dasaratha was exceedingly delighted at this conduct of Rama. The Brahmins, the merchants and other citizens grew particularly fond of him. Amongst the sons of Dasaratha, truthful and mighty Rama was the best as the Self-create is the highest of all the created beings.

Thus great Rama passed twelve years in happiness with Sita. He was intensely devoted to Sita, and Sita too could not bear a moment's separation. Royal saint Janaka bestowed Janaki on Rama according to Brahma form of marriage,¹ and Rama became greatly attached to her beauty and good qualities. Janaki was dutiously devoted to Rama. Rama understood her heart, and Janaki, beautiful as the goddess Lakshmi, also knew Rama's heart. As Vishnu, the Lord of the Gods looked happy and his grace was enhanced by receiving Kamala, so Rama looked more charming with extremely beautiful Sita.

THE END OF THE BALAKANDAM

1. Manus mentions eight forms of marriage : Brahma, Daiya, Arsha, Prajapatya, Gandharva, Asura, Rakshasa and Paisacha. Of these the last four were disapproved forms of marriage. In Brahma marriage the bride is given to a bachelor versed in the Veda who is to be sought out and invited by the bride's guardian to accept the bride offered to him.

AYODHYA KANDAM

CHAPTER I

THE HERO

Bharata at the time of going to his maternal uncle's house took with him affectionate Satrugna, the self-possessed and the ever-conqueror of his foes. Having received paternal affection there, they did not however forget their old father. Dasaratha too could not forget them even for a moment. All the four sons were dear to him as four arms issuing from the same body ; yet amongst the four the eldest Rama was the most favourite. Rama too was foremost of the four in all accomplishments.

Rama was Vishnu himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. Rama was peerless on earth. He was highly beautiful and free from malice, and was qualified like his father. He always addressed the people in gentle words and never used any hard expressions even when rudely addressed. In the magnanimity of his heart he would forget hundreds of evils done to him but would gratefully remember even a single act of kindness ever shown to him. In the leisure of his martial exercises, he discussed Shastras with the wise and the aged people. If anybody would approach him he would talk to him first. He was immensely powerful but never haughty for that. He was truthful and learned, and always honoured the aged. Rama ministered to the welfare of his subjects, and the people too were deeply fond of him. He was a friend of the poor, chastiser of the wicked, and well-versed in religion and social cus-

toms and laws. He was worthy of his line, and always held the duties of a Kshatriya in high esteem. He never participated in profane and irreverent talks. Whenever questioned on anything he answered them wisely like Vrihaspati, the preceptor of the Gods. He was young, healthy and virtuous, and was dear to the people like their another self. He had mastered the Vedas and the Vedangas, and was skilful in the use of all arms, whether employed with *Mantras* or not. He was valiant, candid and the source of all good. He never spoke lie even in utmost peril. He was modest, reserve and always respectful towards his superiors. He was never jubilant or angry just for nothing. He sought no evil. He was free from all idleness and ever vigilant, and ever ready to scan his own faults. He knew the means of honestly amassing wealth and also to distribute it to the deserving objects of charity. He punished or rewarded the people according to the strict rules of justice. He had aged and pious Brahmins for his guide. He was highly proficient in philosophy and poetry. He knew all the arts of enjoyments but never sought pleasure at the cost of morality. He was an expert rider, a great warrior, a valiant general who could successfully lead his army against his enemy and was conversant with all the military manoeuvres for that purpose. He was unconquerable even by the Gods. He was not given to carping, nor was a slave of time. In forbearance he was like the Earth, in intelligence like Vrihaspati, and in prowess like Indra. Thus accomplished, Rama shone like the noon-day sun to the delight of his father and to the benefit of the people. Then the Earth desired excellent Rama as her lord.

Aged Dasaratha wished to install such Rama on the throne and he was highly glad at the prospect of seeing his son on the throne. "Certainly he is more qualified than myself and dearer to the people than I am," thought the aged king.

CHAPTER II

DASARATHA'S WISH

With the object of installing Rama on the throne king Dasaratha one day told his counsellors, "I have grown old, and I feel the infirmities of age in me. Earthquakes, hurricanes, and various evils are portended by the planets and stars. For these reasons, I have decided to install Rama to the throne, beautiful like the moon in its fullest glory and dear to the people. And I doubt not that the people will be greatly delighted at this."

Having decided this, Dasaratha resolved to celebrate the coronation ceremony. He, therefore, with the help of his ministers brought distinguished citizens and chiefs from different provinces, but did not send for Janaka, the king of Mithila, nor for the king Kekaya. As he thought that they would approve the whole thing when they came to know of it.

Then, at Dasaratha's call the obedient chiefs and princes began to fill the capital to pay homage to Dasaratha. Dasaratha then duly summoned them before him, and being seated on his throne and surrounded by the obedient prince Dasaratha looked like Indra encircled by the Gods.

Dasaratha then addressing the august assembly said in a deep resonant voice :

"My men and courtiers, you all know that my ancestors governed this vast kingdom like affectionate fathers. Now, I propose to contribute to the welfare of the people ruled by illustrious Ikshwaku and others. Following the path of my forefathers, I have so long tried to govern to the best of my ability, being heedless of my personal gain. I have grown old under the shade of this white umbrella.¹ I am far advanced in years, and I now yearn for rest.

"This heavy responsibility of Government is incapable of being borne even by saintly people. It requires a hero to shoulder such a burden; and I have become quite fatigued under its pressing weight. With the permission of all the Brahmanas present, I intend to take rest by installing my son to the throne. My son, heroic Rama has inherited all my qualities, nay more, he is like Indra in prowess. And I propose to invest the crown on virtuous Rama, shining like the moon with the constellation of Pushya. He is worthy of you in every respect, and the people of the triple world will find a worthy lord in him. I wish to do this good to the world even today.

"Now tell me whether my proposal meets with your approval or not? If you think that it is due to my fondness for Rama, then advise me what is better; arbitrators can discern the truth emerging from the discussions and opinions of two opposing parties "

Dasaratha stopped, and all the princes hailed his proposal in delight, as the peacocks hail the deep blue clouds in ecstatic joy, and from them rose loud murmurs

1 Insignia of royalty.

of joy. The people shook the ground by their loud acclaim.

Then the Brahmins, military captains, the princes and the citizens consulted together, and being unanimous in their approval, addressing the king, said :

"We know, your age is now over some thousand years, and you have grown old. It is, therefore, proper for you to install Rama—the heir-apparent—on the throne. We all wish to see heroic Rama riding a huge elephant under the royal umbrella."

Dasaratha then to know their minds said, "Your ready approval, however, raises my doubts. While I am still justly governing the world, why do you want to see Rama installed on the throne ?"

Then the citizens and the chiefs replied, "Because your son possesses good many noble qualities and let us recount them in your presence.

"Powerful and peerless Rama is like Indra, the king of Gods. He has thus cast into shade even his illustrious predecessors. He is the most truthful man on earth and indeed the best of men. Virtue and wealth are found blended only in him. He delights the people like the Moon ; in patience and forbearance he is like the Earth, and in might he is the Indra himself. He is virtuous, true to his vows and free from envy. He always consoles the afflicted. He is forgiving, gentle, of sweet speech, and of grateful mind. He is beautiful and of subdued heart. He honours the old and learned Brahmanas. He is unparalleled on earth. He is well-acquainted with the application of all the arms that are in use amongst the Gods and the giants (Asuras). He has mastered all knowledge and knows the Vedas with

all their branches. He is highly proficient in music. He is thoroughly honest and the receptacle of all good. He is never stricken with grief even when there is sufficient cause for it. When occasion arises to fight for the defence of a city or a village he never returns from the battle with Lakshmana without conquering his foes. When he victoriously returns from the fight, either on elephant or on horseback, he never forgets in his triumph to enquire affectionately about the welfare of the people whom he meets in his way. He questions them, as one would do to his sons, everything concerning their children, wives, servants, pupils and the sacrificial fire. He rejoices in the joy of the people and becomes sad in their sufferings as their fathers would have been.

"He has clung first to religion. All his objects are noble and they always produce good results. When he talks, a smile always hovers on his lips. He has aversions for all sorts of quarrels. He can argue like Vrihaspati, the teacher of the Gods. From his graceful brows and large roseate eyes it seems as if Vishnu himself has incarnated on earth. People love him for his heroic qualities. He is never elated with success. Not to speak of this kingdom, he can take charge of the whole world. Following the path of strict justice, he never shrinks from passing death-sentence to those who deserve it but he never oppresses the innocent, rather rewards them profusely. By his magnanimity, Rama has become an object of reverence and love. Like the great Sun his presence is always felt by the people. O king ! we therefore, pray for the installation of Rama. In fact, like Marichi's son, Kashyapa, you have fortu-

nately got such a highly accomplished son. Everybody in the kingdom, whether young or old, pray for Rama's health, his prosperity and longevity. Therefore, O king, for the benefit of all, invest the crown on Rama of delicate hue as of a dark blue lotus."

CHAPTER III

ROYAL DIRECTIONS

Dasaratha was mightily pleased at the conduct of his people and chiefs. Then king Dasaratha said to Vamdeva, Vasishtha and other Brahmins :

"The sacred month of Chaitra is come. The forests are adorned with blossoms and buds. Now you invest the crown on Rama."

At these words there were great shouts of joy.

Priest Vasishtha then addressing the counsellors said, "By tomorrow have a sufficient supply of gold and gems. Collect in the sacrificial hall sacred medicinal herbs, wreaths of white flowers, fried rice, honey, clarified butter, each in a separate vessel, cloths fresh from the loom, fourfold forces, a lucky elephant, a pair of chowries, a chariot, arms, flagstaff, umbrella of pale yellow colour, golden pitchers, a bull with horns wrapped in gold, an entire tiger-skin, and other necessary articles. Decorate the palace-gate and the entrance to the city with garlands and sandal paste and burn fragrant incense at the gates. Have sufficient supply of food, consisting of curd, milk, clarified butter, fried paddy, clean and good rice. Feed everyone sumptuously and pay the Brahmanas handsomely. Tomorrow, early in the morning, the Brahmanas will pronounce their prayer, now invite them cordially. Set

up flags everywhere. Water the streets of the city. Let well-adorned dancing girls wait in the second room of the palace. Keep food, flowers, incense and other articles of worship in temples and under sacred trees (Chaitya). Let stalwart warriors clad in armour and with long swords and shields enter the courtyard of the palace in proud march."

After giving these instructions, Vasishtha and Vamdeva were engaged in priestly duties

King Dasaratha then asked Sumantra to fetch Rama in his presence.

The rulers of the North, South, East and the West together with the Mlechchas, Aryan princes and Mountain and Forest chiefs paid their homage to Dasaratha.

Rama then entered the palace, as lofty as a peak of the Kailas, to meet his father. On seeing Rama, Dasaratha embraced him again and again. In the court a golden seat beset with gems was set apart for Rama. Dasaratha asked Rama to sit upon that. Thereupon Rama took his seat. Then the throne glittered like the golden Sumeru, gilded by the morning rays of the Sun. As the Moon adorns the starry autumnal sky, so Rama enhanced the magnificence of the assembly by his graceful presence.

At the sight of his dear son, Dasaratha was immensely glad, as people are delighted on seeing their richly adorned images on the mirror.

Then Dasaratha said to Rama :

"You are born of Kausalya, my first queen. You are highly qualified and I love you most. You are darling of the people. You ascend the throne when the Moon will enter the Pushya constellation. I know

you are virtuous, yet let me give you some advice.

"Though you are modest, yet be more humble and control your senses. Always replenish your exchequer, arsenal and granaries, and by justice render yourself dear to the people."

The friends of a good ruler are delighted as the Gods are pleased with nectar.

Then the friends of Rama swiftly went to Kausalya and gave her this welcome news. Kausalya was immensely delighted at the news, and bestowed sufficient gold, gems and number of cows to the bringers of this happy news.

Rama went back to his place after bowing profoundly at his father's feet.

CHAPTER IV

THE PREMONITION

When the citizens were gone, king Dasaratha said to his ministers :

"Tomorrow the moon will enter the Pushya constellation, and I have decided to install lotus-eyed Rama on that day." Turning to Sumantra, he said, "Again bring in Rama hither."

Sumantra then quickly went to Rama, who asked about the reason of his coming, and on being told that the king wanted to see him again, Rama hastily went to the king.

After entering the palace, Rama seeing his father from a distance bowed to him with clasped palms. The king then raised him from the ground and after embracing him affectionately asked him to take his seat.

Dasaratha then addressing Rama said, "O Rama !

after long enjoyment of life I have grown old. I have been emancipated from my debts to the Gods, saints, ancestors, Brahmanas and to the self. Today, I make over to you the charge of my people. But I had a very evil dream, as if there were terrible thunders, and meteors were shooting in the day. Astrologers were giving out that the Sun, the Mars and the Rahu have encroached upon my star of birth. When such inauspicious signs are seen, evil happens to the king, and even death may occur to him. A man's mind is generally fickle. Thererore, you ascend the throne before there be any change in my mind. Today, the Moon has entered the Punarvasu stars and it will enter the Pushya tomorrow. I have become eager to confer on you the crown, and I shall invest you with that tomorrow. Therefore, pass the night lying on a bed of Kusha-grass with my daughter-in-law Sita by observing fast and other sacred restrictions. There are many hindrances to a good act so let your friends guard you this night. I wish to invest you with the crown during Bharata's absence, so that his mind may not be stained by envy. I know he is devoted to you, yet human mind is inconstant and undergoes sudden changes when there is any cause for it. Even the hearts of the virtuous are changed and disturbed by envy, anger, malice and other strong passions. You now retire. Tomorrow you will have to take charge of the kingdom."

Rama then went away and in order to inform Janaki about his father's behest, Rama entered his room but missing Janaki there he went to the quarters of his mother.

By that time Kausalya having heard the news of Rama's installation to the throne, he entered the hall of worship with Sumitra, Sita and Lakshmana, and there being tended by Sumitra, Lakshmana, and Sita she prayed to the Eternal Spirit. She was absorbed in deep meditation with closed eyes and suspended breath. On arriving there Rama found his mother clad in silk and engaged in prayer for his welfare.

Then addressing his mother, Rama said, "Mother ! father has entrusted the kingdom to me and the coronation ceremony takes place tomorrow. He has asked me and Janaki to observe fast this night. You then arrange for all things that will be required for Janaki tomorrow."

Kausalya blessed Rama cheerfully, "May you live long. May you conquer your enemies. May you prosper to the delight of the friends of mine and of Sumitra. I am fortunate that I bore thee in my womb. This day, all my supplications to Lord Hari have been fulfilled. Royal splendour will ever cling to thee."

Lakshmana was seated there with clasped hands. Casting his eyes on Lakshmana Rama said, "Lakshmana, henceforward you will have to share the burden of the kingdom along with me. You are my second self. My life and kingdom are meant for you. So enjoy yourself as you like."

After greeting Kausalya, Sumitra and Lakshmana thus Rama went to his quarters.

CHAPTER V

THE JOY

Dasaratha asked Vasishtha to give necessary directions to Rama and Sita. Saintly Vasishtha then arrived at Rama's residence. It looked from a distance like a mass of amber clouds. Rama respectfully received the saint. Vasishtha initiated Rama and Janaki into fast by Mantras. Rama, after spending some time in company of his friends, with their permission entered his quarters which, at that time, with joyous faces looked like a lake with full-blown lotuses, and resounding with the notes of joyous birds.

Vasishtha on emerging from Rama's palace found the streets crowded with men. People were going in batches and there were constant shouts of joy, like the roaring of the sea. All the places were filled up to their utmost capacities. All the highways were swept and watered. Garlands hung on every gate and flags were streaming from every house. The whole city was anxiously waiting for the morning to witness the coronation ceremony. The city wore a gay, festive look.

Vasishtha waded his way through that sea of human heads and entered the castle high as a mountain-peak (Himavat) and appeared before the king as Vrihaspati does before Indra.

The king stood up from the throne at Vasishtha's sight. Vasishtha then informed the king that all his directions had been carried out.

Dasaratha then with Vasishtha's permission entered the inner apartment as a lion enters his den in a mountain cave. Just as the moon shines in the midst of a

galaxy of stars, so Dasaratha appeared in the midst of the pearl-studded beauties of his palace.

When Vasishtha was gone, Rama took his bath and worshipped Narayana, and offered oblation with clarified butter into fire, and then partook its remainder. He then lay down in collected mind with Sita on a bed of grass within the precincts of that Vishnu's shrine.

When about two hours of night yet remained, Rama left his bed and asked his men to decorate his house. At that time he was greeted by the chants and songs of the birds. He put on a silken dress and said his prayers to Narayana and had the Brahmanas perform the Swastivachan rite. The whole city resounded with the blares of trumpets and the deep voice of the Brahmana's hailing the dawn.

All the citizens then rejoiced at the news that Rama had fasted with Janaki.

Then the citizens began to decorate the whole city. Flagstaves with fluttering banners were raised from all temples high as the peaks and white as the fleecy clouds. They were raised in every crossing, and they streamed from every housetop, from every rich mansion, and from every shop full of merchandise, and every tall road-side tree and Chaityas were decorated with flags and ribbons. Streets decorated with floral wreathes became fragrant with the sweet scent of incense. The people feasted their eyes and ears upon dancing and songs performed by the musicians. Thinking that Rama might inspect the city at night, after his coronation, the people, by way of decoration, reared up lamp posts in the shape of trees, and they began to discuss about Rama's coronation. Even the children in groups, when they

were playing before their house-doors, talked of that. People in knots were praising Dasaratha for his noble decision in installing Rama on the throne. At last, Ayodhya resembling like a heavenly city, became loud with the huzza and noise of the outsiders that began to pour in the city by that time.

CHAPTER VI

MANTHARA

Queen Kaikeyi brought up an orphan girl whom she picked up from her maternal uncle's house. Her name was Manthara, and she served Kaikeyi as her maid.

Early in the morning Manthara ascended the terrace of the palace, white as the moon-light, to ascertain the cause of such unusual noise and demonstrations in the city.

She found the streets of Ayodhya sprinkled with sweet-scented sandal water and strewn with red lotuses and adorned with flags and festoons. Some roads led through undulating plains and some were wide for the facility of thoroughfare, and all were well-watered; and the Brahmins were making noise with garlands and sweets in their hands. She found the doorway of every temple, painted white, and the streets resounded with music, chanting of the Vedas and shouts of the people. Horses and elephants were briskly plying along the streets. Manthara was greatly surprised at the sight and approaching a nurse clad in white questioned :

"Why queen Kausalya is making such charities in cheerful heart? What is the cause of this great delight of the people, what the king will do today?"

The nurse cheerfully replied, "Today the king will install Rama on the throne."

Malicious Manthara hearing these words of the nurse burnt in rage like a flaming log, and hurriedly descending from the terrace she entered the room of Kaikeyi, and addressing her in a reproachful voice, said :

"Arise, you foolish one, why you are still lying on your bed ? You know not what calamity is about to fall on you. You boast of your good fortune, while you are neglected by the king ! Your good fortune is as short-lived as the waters of a summer stream."

Having heard these hard expressions of Manthara, delivered in passion, Kaikeyi sorrowfully asked, "Manthara ! what evil has happened ? Why do you look so much distressed ?"

Then Manthara assuming an air of deeper sorrow, in angry eloquence said, "O lady, a great danger is imminent. The king will install Rama on the throne. I don't see any remedy for it. My heart is overwhelmed with grief and anger, and my limbs are burning as if in a flame. I have come here for your good. Know it for certain, I always grieve in your sorrows and delight in your joys. You are a queen and the daughter of a king. Why do you not, therefore, appreciate the loss of sovereignty ? Your husband is of fair speech but he has a crooked heart. His words are sweet, but his heart is full of gall. You know him to be truthful and honest, you have therefore, been thus deceived. The king only cozens with sweet words but he fulfils the desire of Kausalya. This crafty king has sent away Bharata to his maternal uncle's house for conferring safely the kingdom on Rama. You are awfully silly, and disregard-

ing your own weal and interest, and as an affectionate mother you have taken in your lap an enemy as fell as a deadly snake; and what is done by a snake or enemy when left alone has been committed to your son by Dasaratha. All his words of consolation are vain, he is going to ruin you under the plea of investing the crown on Rama. The time has come for quick decision and to act for your own good. Just save yourself, Bharata and myself from this imminent danger."

Queen Kaikeyi rose from her bed with a smiling countenance, beautiful as the moon, and hearing the news of Rama's coronation, in gladsome heart rewarded Manthara with ornaments, and then addressing her, she cheerfully said, "What a piece of good news you have conveyed this day! Tell me what shall I give you for this happy news? Darling Rama and Bharata are both equal to me, and I have been more delighted at the news that the king is going to install Rama on the throne. To tell you the truth, there is not a happier news to me than this, and I bless you, Manthara, for conveying that to me. Now tell me what is your prayer, and I shall immediately grant you that."

Manthara then being beside herself with grief and rage, threw off the ornaments on the floor and maliciously commenced:

"O Kaikeyi, why do you display your delight on such an unjust occasion like this? Don't you see that you will be soon cast into a sea of sorrow? Though overwhelmed with grief I cannot but laugh at your silliness in seeing you rejoicing in your calamity. Which intelligent woman can rejoice at the prosperity of her co-wife's son, unwelcome as death itself? I am sorry

for your foolish perverseness. All the brothers have equal claim to the throne. Therefore Rama is afraid of Bharata, but know it that Rama may be the cause of Bharata's mischief.

Heroic Lakshmana is devoted to Rama, so he is not afraid of Lakshmana. Likewise Satrugna is devoted to Bharata, Rama has nothing to fear from Satrugna. In sequence of birth Bharata may set up claim for the throne, but the case is different with Lakshmana and Satrugna. Rama is vigilant, learned, conversant in the arts of peace and war and well-versed in kingly duties. Rama will surely do mischief to Bharata, and this thought is now uppermost in my mind. Queen Kausalya is fortunate. Her son's coronation ceremony will be celebrated today. The kingdom now belongs to her. You will serve her with clasped hands as her maid. Like you, we shall be her maid-servants, and Bharata will be a valet to Rama. Sita will enjoy herself with her maids of honour, and your daughter-in-law will pass her days in sorrow seeing Bharata thus humbled." Finding Manthara thus averse to Rama, Kaikeyi gently recounted the accomplishments of Rama in her presence :

"Manthara, darling Rama is virtuous, accomplished, well-educated, truthful, grateful and of pure character. He is the eldest son of the king, and the kingdom rightly belongs to him. Long-lived Rama will minister to the welfare of his brothers and of the people with parental care. Then why do you grieve at this news? Bharata will get his father's kingdom a hundred years after Rama. Why do you then burn with your own fire on this festive occasion? I always wish for the good of

Rama as I do for Bharata, my son. Rama, too, loves and honours me more than he does his own mother. Though the kingdom now belongs to Rama yet it is practically Bharata's, for Rama loves his brothers as his own self."

Manthara then heaved a deep sigh of grief and said :

"O Kaikeyi ! it is really strange that you would regard that to be an evil what is really good for you. You are going to be engulfed in troubles and sorrows, but through your foolishness you do not realise your own situation. Rama is now going to be the king, after him his son will ascend the throne. Bharata will therefore be cut off for good from the royal line. All the sons of a king are not entitled to the kingdom. Had it been so, there would have been great social and political disorders. Therefore, the sovereigns invest their crowns either on their eldest sons or upon the most accomplished ones. This is the custom. I therefore tell you that Bharata will thus be banished from the line of the sovereigns, consequently from all prosperity and happiness. It is for your good that I am taking such pains. I am sorry, you do not understand me, on the other hand, you want to reward me at the news of prosperity of your co-wife's son ! Know it for certain, Rama after safely ascending the throne will either send Bharata into exile or put him to death. Bharata is still a boy, he is quite innocent of everything, and it is you that have sent him to his maternal uncle's house. Had Bharata been present at this time, certainly the king could not have been unkind to him. Attachment grows by close proximity. Look ! even the trees, creepers and shrubs embrace one another in close proxi-

mity of space. Not only Bharata is not present, but Satrugghna has also gone with him. Had he been present there could have been some remedy. I have heard that once a batch of foresters wished to cut down a tree, but it was saved, being surrounded with thorny shrubs. Know it that no injury will be done by Lakshmana but surely Rama will deprive Bharata of his life. Now let Bharata proceed to the forest from his maternal uncle's house. This seems to me to be the only desirable alternative, and this will do good to you and to your friends.

"Ah, darling Bharata, you have been brought up in the lap of happiness, now Rama is your enemy. His prosperity is your downfall. O, save Bharata from his danger ! Rama's mother Kausalya is your co-wife. You have neglected her being elated by the caress of your husband. Don't forget that she will now wreck her vengeance on you. What shall I say more ? If Rama gets this vast kingdom with the hills and the seas, he will surely insult you along with your son. Now devise the ways and means how Bharata can be installed to the throne and Rama may be sent away in exile !"

At this the wrath of Kaikeyi was up, and she exclaimed in panting breath, "Manthara, this very day I shall send Rama into exile and invest the crown on Bharata. Now advise me how can I achieve my object."

Then crooked Manthara replied, "I am telling you the ways by which the kingdom will be Bharata's. Just decide yourself whether you approve of them or not. Don't you remember what so often you had repeated to me ? Or do you wish to hear it from my own lips ?"

At this Kaikeyi raised herself a little from her

luxuriant bed and asked, "Tell me now, Manthara, by what means Bharata will gain the kingdom, and not Rama?"

Manthara returned, "O queen! there is a city called Vijayanta in Dandakaranya in the south. There lived once an Asura named Timidvaja, otherwise known as Samvara. There was a war between him and Indra. In this war between the gods and the demons, king Dasaratha along with other royal saints went to help Indra in the field and you accompanied the king at that time. In that war Dasaratha fought most bravely and received wounds all over the body. Once he fainted in the battle-field. Seeing him thus fainted, you removed him from the battle-field and thus saved his life. The king then being highly pleased with you promised you two boons. But you then said that you would ask for them when you wished, and the king agreed to your proposal. I did not know anything about it, but I have heard it from your own lips, but I have not forgotten it. Now prevent the installation of Rama, and pray for Rama's exile for fourteen years and the installation of Bharata on the throne. If Rama goes to the forest for fourteen years, your son Bharata will be able to secure his position by winning half the people on his side. Go now, put on dirty rags on your person, enter the chamber of wrath and lie down there on the naked floor. But take care when the king comes to you don't look to him, don't talk to him, but go on weeping incessantly. I know, the king loves you dearly, he can even enter into fire for you. He will never dare to offend you or provoke your wrath. He can sacrifice his life for your pleasure.

Never think that he will set aside your words. Now you think of your luck. I warn you again, never to accept gold and jewels what the king may offer you to appease your anger. Don't be tempted by them. You just remind the king of the two boons he had promised you in the war between the Gods and the demons, and always remain on the alert to gain your object. When the king will raise you from the ground for granting your prayers, first make him swear, and then speak out your mind. O lady ! Bharata's weal will be attained by Rama's exile. In his exile the people will lose their love for Rama, and Bharata will then reign undisturbed, and by the time Rama returns back Bharata will be darling of the people. So be bold in your insistence. This is the time to dissuade the king from his decision."

Manthara thus succeeded in persuading Kaikeyi to accept the evil as truth, and Kaikeyi gladly agreed to her words. She, at the instigation of Manthara, betook a wrong path, like a mare springing after her young colt and addressing Manthara said :

"You have spoken the right thing. I admire your wisdom. In intelligence you are the best of all hump-backs. You always wish me good and are devoted to my well-being. To tell the truth, I could not first understand this wicked design of the king. Oh Manthara ! here are many vicious and ugly-crooked persons on earth but you alone is beautiful among them like a lotus bent by the breeze. Your plump and heaving breast graceful navel, lean waist, spacious hips adorned with tinkling-zones. Your face is beautiful like the moon. How well-shaped your legs and thighs are ! You are tall, and when you walk you look like a veri-

table swan. You have all the dark witchery of Samvara Asura in you. Policy and intelligence reside in your heart. Oh beauty ! if I can send Rama to the forest and install Bharata to the throne, I shall besmear your hump with sandal-paste and adorn it with ornaments of gold, and shall give you golden *Tilak* to decorate your face. Being clad in elegant dress and decked with beautiful ornaments you will walk like a goddess and your lotus-face will defy the beauty of the morning. You will rise in eminence to the disappointment of your enemies ; and as you now attend on me, others will wait upon you."

Kaikeyi lying on her bed, like a flame of fire upon the sacrificial altar, thus praised Manthara. And she concluded by saying, "Oh lady ! it is useless to build up a dam when the water has already flown out. Now just rise and exert yourself for your welfare. Enter the wrath-chamber soon and show your anger to the king."

Being thus incited by Manthara, gold-coloured Kaikeyi entered the chamber of wrath and throwing down the precious pearl necklace and other jewelleries from her person she sat down on the floor and said, "Oh Manthara ! either I shall die or shall install Bharata on the throne. I have no hankering for anything else, and I assure you that if the king invest the crown on Rama, I will put an end to my life."

Then Manthara said, "Surely along with your son you will have to rue if the kingdom goes to Rama. So try your level best to secure it for Bharata."

Thus being repeatedly provoked by Manthara, Kaikeyi by placing her hand on her agitated breast,

said, "Manthara ! either I die in this chamber of wrath, and you carry that news to the king, or you will hear that Rama has been sent to exile and Bharata has got the throne. If Rama does go to the forest, I have no more any need of luxury, nay, not even of my life."

Kaikeyi after speaking out her mind in these cruel words lay down on the ground, like a fallen angel. Her beautiful face was dark with anger, and her body being stripped of all ornaments appeared like the starless sky of a gloomy night. Thus Kaikeyi lay down with a smothered heart.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE CHAMBER OF WRATH

In the chamber of wrath Kaikeyi then began to heave sighs like a panting snake. For some time she thought over the prospect of her happiness, and after deciding her course of action, she spoke it to Manthara, and her devoted maid was glad at this.

Queen Kaikeyi lay down with frowning brows and eyes red with anger. The ground being strewn with her garlands and ornaments (which she had cast off) shone like a bright starry firmament.

In the meantime, king Dasaratha after giving necessary directions for the installation of Rama entered the inner compartment of his palace. Thinking that Kaikeyi has not yet heard the gladsome news of Rama's coronation, he entered Kaikeyi's quarters to convey that happy news, as the moon unwittingly enters the white clouds in the sky rendered frightful by the presence of

the Rahu¹ in them. Dasaratha saw humpbacked and other dwarfish women straying about hither and thither. At some parts of the palace, parrots, peacocks, Kraunchas and swans were cackling in joy. Somewhere sweet musical instruments like lyres and flutes were being played. There stood beautiful groves and painted houses interspersed with trees bearing fruits and flowers all round the year.

There stood tall Champaka and red Asoka trees. There were raised platforms and seats of ivory, gold and silver. In some parts there were beautiful ponds and lakes. Rich food and drink were stored and other precious stones. After entering the inner apartment² which looked like an earthly paradise, he was at that time under the influence of passion. Dasaratha missed Kaikeyi in her bed-chamber. Formerly Kaikeyi never stayed out at that time.

Dasaratha did not know that Kaikeyi was intent upon Bharata's installation. Finding Kaikeyi not in her room, he, as on previous occasions, enquired of a warder about her, and the warder with a sacred look and clasped hands said that the queen being angry had entered the chamber of wrath.

At these words, Dasaratha grew highly anxious and entered the chamber of wrath with an agitated heart. On entering, Dasaratha found her lying on the ground who

1 The shadow of the earth that is cast upon the moon at the time of the eclipse is called Rahu.

2 It does not mean a Harem, for there was no such thing at that time. It is purely a Mahomedan institution introduced to India after the Mahomedan conquest. It simply means a quarter occupied by the ladies.

was wont to lie on milk-white downy beds. His heart at this sight began to be consumed with sorrow. The old king seeing his beloved, youthful wife lying on the ground, like an up-rooted creeper, like a goddess hurled down from the heaven, like an illusion to bewitch one's heart, like a doe caught in a trap, or like an elephant struck down by a hunter's shaft, was taken by painful surprise and he began to pat on her body out of affection and love.

Then the doted king addressing the lotus-eyed beauty, said, "Tell me why you are angry, I know nothing of its cause. Who has insulted or dared to abuse you? Why do you make me unhappy by lying on the dust? I always pray for your welfare. Then why are you lying there like an ill-starred person when I am still alive? I have got many skilful physicians under me and have rewarded them amply. Tell me what is now ailing you; the doctor will cure you of that. Darling! I am ever devoted to you. Now tell me frankly whom you wish to favour or who has incurred your displeasure? Don't torture your body so. Myself and my men are always obedient to you. Now tell me, which innocent man you want to put to death, or which guilty person will be set at liberty? Which poor fellow is to be made rich, or which rich man will be deprived of his riches? I never dared to act against your will. Tell me your wish, and I shall try to fulfil your desire even at the sacrifice of my life. You know that I am ever devoted to you, so never doubt about the attainment of your object and on my honour and truth I swear that I shall carry out your desire. Lands to the utmost verge of the earth that is lighted by the sun belong to me.

Dravira, Sindhu, Souvira, Sourashtras, Dakshinapatha, Anga, Banga, Magadha, Matsha, Kashi, and Koshala are all under my rule. All wealth, crops, and animals of these provinces are mine. Just ask for what you want of them. Don't torture your delicate body any further. Rise up and tell me the cause of your tears. Like the sun drying up the dews by its rays, I shall remove all apprehensions from your heart."

CHAPTER VIII

KAIKEYI SPEAKS

Being thus assured by these sweet words of Dasaratha, she opened her lips to torment her husband with unexpected pain. She said, "My Lord! none has insulted or abused me. I have resolved something in my mind, and you will have to fulfil my desire. If you are really earnest in seeing me happy, then for my confidence you must first bind yourself by an oath, or I shall not disclose my intentions to you."

The king then, with a smile, raised Kaikeyi from the ground and placing her on his lap he began, "Ah my proud beauty! don't you know that I have no dearer object than you excepting Rama on earth, and I swear by that beloved and invincible Rama that I shall accomplish what you wish. My mind, like my words, is eager to carry out your wishes. Now tell me your mind and save me from infinite misery. Never fear that I shall ever refuse to grant your prayer. By my religion I swear, I shall do your pleasure. Now speak out your heart without any hesitation whatsoever."

Kaikeyi thus seeing Dasaratha bound by solemn oath, became almost certain about the fulfilment of her

desire, and thinking of Bharata's installation, she, like cruel death, said the dreadful words, "You have repeatedly sworn to grant my prayer. Let it be heard by the thirty-three deities ; let it be witnessed by the sun, the moon, day and night, the sky, the ten quarters, the household gods, deities, the earth, Gandharvas, the Rakshasas ; let all creatures hear your vow Let the Gods witness that a truthful king has promised to grant my prayer." Having thus complementing the king for her own interest, queen Kaikeyi said :

"Oh king, just remember the fight between the Gods and the Asuras and your own duel with Samvara in which you fainted from your weakness. At that time I saved your life by nursing you day and night. For that you wanted to grant me two boons, but then I did not ask for anything. Now the time has arrived for asking for them, and if you do not grant my prayer I shall give up my life for this insult."

Kaikeyi subdued the king completely by her beauty, and Dasaratha could not set her at naught. The king bound himself by a vow for his own destruction, as a deer is entrapped by a fatal noose. Kaikeyi then said, "Instead of installing Rama on the throne install Bharata in his place, and let gentle Rama wearing deer-skin and in matted locks pass his life as a mendicant for fourteen years in the Dandaka forest. Let Bharata be crowned and Rama go to the forest even this day.

"This is my wish and my prayer. Prove yourself true to your words and keep your prestige and uphold the honour of your line. Truth, say the sages, is highly beneficent to the people in the next world."

Dasaratha was stunned by the speech :

"Is this a day-dream or worst confusion has seized my mind? Is this due to the influence of an evil planet that my mind has been completely unhinged?"

While thus resolving in his mind Dasaratha fell into a swoon. When he regained his consciousness, Kaikeyi's words at once rose in his mind. He became distressed as a deer at the sight of a tigress. He heaved a deep sigh and sat upon the bare ground. He writhed like a venomous snake suffocating under the spell of a charm. He panted in grief and anger and cried, "Ah shame!" And he again fell into a swoon. He regained his senses after a long time and broke forth smothered with grief and anger :

"Ah, you vile and wicked woman! O, thou destroyer of your own clan! What mischief has been done to you either by Rama or by me? Rama looks upon you as his own mother. Then why are you bent upon his ruin? In my ignorance I brought you home like a deadly serpent for my own destruction. Everybody is fond of Rama for his virtues. For what offence I shall forsake him? I can renounce Kausalya, Sumitra, royal splendour, nay, even my own life but not Rama in any way. My heart leaps up at his sight, and I lose my senses in his absence. The (animal) world may live without the Sun and crops can exist without water, but I shall not live without Rama. So at once give up your resolve. Be graciously pleased with me. Don't entertain that cruel intention.

"Formerly you used to say, 'Rama is my eldest son, he is the most virtuous of all.' Now I see this was only to please my ears; otherwise you could not have been sorry at his installation to the throne, nor could you

have given me so much pain; or perhaps you have been possessed by an evil spirit, and you are speaking under its influence or you could not have been so thoroughly changed.

"Kaikeyi! you have not behaved with me improperly on any occasion as yet, nor have done me any mischief, so I cannot think that your mind can be thus changed without any extraneous cause. You told me many a time that Rama was dear to you like Bharata. Then why do you want to send Rama to the forest for fourteen years? Rama honours and tends you more than Bharata.

"There are hundreds of men and women in my palace but nobody has ever spoken ill of Rama. He has won over the people by his good deeds. He has subdued all by his love of truth, the Brahmanas by his charity, his superiors by his devotion, and his enemies by his valour. Truth, purity, asceticism, learning, affection and sympathy are all found in him. How shall I say unpleasant words to him who always speaks sweet words to everybody? It breaks my heart even to think of it. Kaikeyi, I have grown old, my end is near, be pleased and have pity on me. I shall give you what else you want on land or sea. Give up that evil design. I entreat you in clasped palms. I throw myself at your feet: Please save Rama and see that I may not incur the sin of renouncing the innocent one."

King Dasaratha was overwhelmed with grief. At times he fell into a swoon, and at times he wept bitterly praying as to how to get out of this ocean of sorrow. But inexorable Kaikeyi said:

"O king! after promising boons if you repent after-

wards, then how will you maintain your uprightness on earth? When the Rajarshis will ask you about this, how will you answer them? Wilt thou then say that I have broken my promise to Kaikeyi to whose services I owe my life? You have said one thing just now, and you are retracting it the next moment; this act of yours will disgrace all the sovereigns of this line. King Saivya being bound by truth (his promise) offered his own flesh to the hawk in order to save a pigeon from it. King Alaka attained excellent merit by giving his own eyes to a blind Brahmana. The ocean being bound by a promise does not go beyond its shores. Just remember these noble instances. Don't break your promise. I find you have grown perverse, and by giving the kingdom to Rama you want to pass your time in pleasure with Kausalya. Now, whether my prayer be good or bad, or whether you have promised to me truly or falsely, do not deviate from it. If you install Rama on the throne, I shall drink poison even in your presence. I shall prefer death instead of paying homage to Kausalya. I swear by my beloved Bharata's name that I shall never be content except with Rama's exile."

Kaikeyi stopped. The king hearing such cruel words from Kaikeyi angrily stared at her but he could utter no word. In restless fear he brooded over his thoughtless promise and Kaikeyi's evil design, and like a felled tree he again fainted on the ground crying, "O Rama!" At that moment the king looked like a mad man, whose mind has been thoroughly unhinged; he looked like a (delirious) patient passing through a crisis or an exhausted python.

After regaining his consciousness he asked Kaikeyi,

"Tell me who has induced you to believe in this evil as good? You are talking like a mad person, don't you feel ashamed? I did not know that your nature was so vicious. Tell me why do you ask for such a cruel thing? Why do you apprehend mischief from Rama? If you wish to do any good to the people, to Bharata, and to me, please desist from it.

"O cruel woman! how Rama or myself have offended you? Do you think that we have conspired to hurt you? Your desire, however, is not to be fulfilled. I consider Bharata as more righteous than Rama, and it does not seem at all probable that Bharata will accept the kingdom by depriving Rama. Alas! when I shall tell Rama that I shall send him to exile, his face will grow dark like the moon in the eclipse. How shall I look at that? I have just now settled everything about the coronation ceremony with friends and counsellors, how shall I withdraw my instructions like a defeated enemy? If I act so unjustly at your importunities, the monarchs coming from different quarters will say that this king of the Ikshwaku race is surely a child. How could he rule for so many years? When the learned and aged people will ask me, 'Where is Rama? What shall I tell them? Even if I say this truth that I have sent Rama into exile for Kaikeyi's torments, people will not believe me.'

"Alas! what will Kausalya tell me when she will hear of Rama's exile? How shall I answer her? In service, Kausalya is like a maid-servant; in pleasant talks, she is like a friend; in religious practices, she is a true partner in life; in good wishes like a sister and in affection like a mother. Though she is worthy

of honour, I never show her any respects out of your fear. My attachment for you has proved a source of torment to me, as unhealthy food injures a sick person. Sumitra will be greatly alarmed by the news of Rama's exile, and she will no more believe in me.

"Now, when daughter Janaki will hear these woeful news of Rama's exile and my death, she will renounce her body, like a Kinnari on the Himalayas forsaken by her Kinnara. When I shall see Janaki weeping and Rama going to the forest, surely I shall not survive long. You will then be a widow and enjoy the kingdom with Bharata. As the people find tempting wine a veritable poison when it produces intoxication after drinking, so I find you now. So long I knew you to be devoted and chaste but from your conduct I find you otherwise. To fulfil your end you cozened me with sweet words, as the hunter kills the deer after alluring it (to close quarters) by sweet songs. In fact, I have purchased my wife's happiness at the cost of my son.

"O how sad ! how painful ! I have been suffering from your words for being promise-bound to you. I suffer as a man does for his misdeeds committed in a previous birth. Kaikeyi, I am a wretch and so long I dallied with you as if with a halter round my neck, forgetting in ignorance that it was death itself. Like a child I have caught hold of a deadly snake. I am a vicious wreck. I have deprived such a virtuous son of his ancestral kingdom. People will no doubt abuse me, and call me lustful and foolish for sending such a son to exile at the request of his wife. Rama has already grown lean by studying the Vedas, observing Brahmacharya, how will he bear the hardships of a forest-life ?

He never disobeys or demurs from my words, and if I ask him to go to the forest he will at once say, 'Very well, let me go.' If he refuses to obey my words, it will be really good to me, but alas he will not do that. My crime is unpardonable and has become a fit object of public contempt. Death will certainly call me to its abode after Rama's departure. After Rama's exile and my death I know not into what trouble you will put my other men.

"Henceforward I shall be condemned as a drunkard. Kausalya will surely die for want of Rama and myself, and so will Sumitra if she loses Lakshmana, Satrughna and me. You will alone rule in the Ikshwaku line. If Bharata be delighted at Rama's exile, let him not perform any funeral rites after my death. For my ill-luck you came to my house, for which I shall have to bear eternal infamy.

"How will Rama walk through jungles who always rides on horse-back, on elephants, and in chariots? How will he live on pungent fruits and roots of the forest, at whose meal-time cooks (wearing ear-rings) vie with one another in preparing food and drink for him? How will he who always wears costly apparel put on a piece of (coarse) red cloth? Ah! women are highly deceitful and selfish. Fie on them. No, all women are not so. I only call Bharata's mother Kaikeyi as such.

"You have been created by God to plague me eternally. Why your teeth did not crumble down before you could utter such dreadful thing against thy husband and thy son?

"You are the destroyer of your own clan. You are

dreadful like a sharp razor. I shall not comply with your cruel request whether you enter into fire, water, earth or drink poison."

Dasaratha began to lament bitterly and fell unconscious, as a weak patient sometimes faints when he stretches his hand to catch hold of a thing.

Dasaratha was lying on the ground like king Yayati fallen from the heaven when his virtue became exhausted. He was about to catch hold of his wife's feet for mercy but Kaikeyi was inexorable. After restoring Dasaratha's consciousness she said :

"King ! you call yourself truthful and even take pride for being firm to your vows. Why do you then refuse my prayer and thus break your words ?" Dasaratha angrily replied, "Ah, vile woman ! how can I send my darling Rama to forest ? How shall I witness all his sufferings and hardships ? If I send Rama to the forest at your request, I shall be condemned as a hen-pecked husband, and my fair reputation will thus for ever be sullied."

When Dasaratha was thus lamenting bitterly, the shades of the evening began to fall. At last, the night set in, but that pretty moon-lit night could not console the king, rather it increased his sufferings more. He looked above and said with a sigh, "O starry night, do not pass away. I beseech thee in clasped palms, please do me this favour, nay, rather soon be over, for with the dawn Rama goes to the forest and my life goes after him. I shall thus be saved from the cause of seeing that cruel face, for which I have been suffering so immensely."

Kaikeyi, however, pressed again and again for

sending Rama to the forest. Dasaratha again fell into a swoon.

At last, the night was over and the musicians roused Dasaratha from sleep by singing his eulogy—but in his affliction it became unbearable to him and he at once asked them to stop.

CHAPTER IX

EXHORTATIONS

When the king rose from sleep Kaikeyi again ruthlessly commenced :

"Why do you look so sad by promising me the boon as if you have committed a great sin ! It is your duty to keep your reputation and dignity unsullied by performing what you have promised. Virtuous people say, truth is the highest virtue, and it is in the interest of righteousness that I am exhorting you to keep up your promise. You know, how king Saivya attained great merits by offering his flesh to the hawk, how king Alaka unhesitatingly plucked his own eye for a blind Brahmana. Truth is eternal, truth is Brahma. Upon truth all religion is based. Truth is the indestructible Veda. It is through truth that man attains his highest salvation.

"Now, if you have any regard for religion, then follow truth. Do not deviate from your promise. I say this in the interest of your righteousness. Send Rama into exile. If you neglect it, I shall put an end to my life even in your presence."

Dasaratha grew pale at these exhortations of Kaikeyi and after some great efforts he broke forth again, "O wicked woman ! hereby I renounce your hand which

I took mine with Mantras before the sacrificial fire. Hereby, I also renounce my son Bharata born of your womb. The night is over. Even now the people will come to me and ask me to expedite about the installation of Rama. But since you stand in the way, Rama will perform my funeral obsequies with the provisions procured for his coronation."

Kaikeyi blazed forth at these words and said :

"What you are saying now? Send for Rama immediately, despatch him to the forest, and install Bharata on the throne, or you shan't be able to go even a step from this place."

Then Dasaratha smarting under great pain said, "I am bound by truth. My senses are about to leave me. I can protest no more. Do what you will. Only let me have a last look of Rama before my consciousness fails me."

By this time the sun rose, and the auspicious hour arrived. And Vasishtha with all the articles of coronation and his pupils entered the palace. In his way he found the streets well-broomed and watered ; the shops full of merchandise, flags streaming from every place, and the whole atmosphere laden with the fragrance of sandal, Aguru, and incense. Signs of great festivity were to be met everywhere. And Vasishtha with a cheerful heart waded his way through a joyous and eager crowd to Dasaratha.

At that time Sumantra came out of the inner apartment of the palace, and Vasishtha said to him, "Go and soon inform the king of my arrival. Tell him that waters of the sea and of the Ganges have been brought in golden pitchers. Seats made of fig tree, all kinds of

seeds, perfumes, gems, honey, curds, clarified butter, fried paddy, Kusha grass, flowers, eight exceedingly beautiful maids, a formidable elephant, chariot yoked with four horses, swords, bow, carriage for the conveyance of men, white umbrella, white chowries, golden vase, a bull of pale yellow-colour with a big hump and bound by a golden chain, a mighty lion with four prominent teeth, a royal throne, tiger-skin, sacrificial wood, fire, all kinds of musical instruments, well-adorned public women, Brahmins, Acharyas (teachers), cows and various kinds of sacred animals and birds have been collected. Prominent men of the town and provinces, and merchants with their servants have gathered. Chiefs and rulers from different quarters have been eagerly waiting to witness the coronation of Rama. Ask the king to be ready without delay so that Rama may be installed under the Pushaya star."

At this, Sumantra proceeded to the quarters of Dararatha. At that time, Sumantra did not know what had happened in the meantime to the king. As usual he appeared before the king and greeted him with words of praise. He said, "You are the only object of our delight. As the sea, tinged by the crimson rays of the dawn, delight the eyes of the people, so you delight us all. I awaken you, as the Vedas and other sacred learning in yore awakened the self-created Lord of all for creation. As the sun and the moon in turn illumine the earth, so let me enlighten today. Arise, O king, today is the coronation ceremony of Rama. Put on your wonderful apparel and issue from the palace like the blazing sun from the golden Sumeru hill. Everything has been made ready for the coronation ceremony.

and all are anxiously waiting for you. Without you we look like an army without its leader, like a flock of cattle without its keeper, so please come and give the necessary orders."

Hearing these words, Dasaratha was again overwhelmed with grief and looking towards Sumantra with a dry, pale face said, "Sumantra, this eulogy of yours pains my heart the more."

At these words, and seeing the wretched look of the king, Sumantra stepped aside a little. Finding the king quite tongue-tied with sorrow, Kaikeyi said :

"Sumantra! the king kept up the whole night in joy for Rama's coronation. He has fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion. So, please bring Rama hither."

"How can I go without the royal leave?" said Sumantra.

At this Dasaratha said to Sumantra :

"Go, bring in Rama. I am anxious to see him."

Then Sumantra gladly went forth to fetch Rama when Kaikeyi added :

"Please bring the prince soon."

"Evidently, the queen is impatient to see the installation of Rama, and the king too is now awake, hence this hurry," thought Sumantra as he issued from the palace.

CHAPTER X

RAMA'S ARRIVAL

Brahmins versed in the Vedas, counsellors, captains, royal priest Vasishtha were all waiting at the gate.

They brought all articles for the installation ceremony. Not finding the king till then, they talked

amongst themselves, "Who will inform the king of our arrival ? The sun is up, and we do not yet see the king."

While they were thus speaking, Sumantra met them and said that he was going to fetch Rama speedily before the king, and he again entered the sleeping chamber of the king and standing behind a curtain asked the king to rise up and meet the assembled people at the gate.

But Dasaratha said, "Bring here Rama. What makes you to disobey my order ? I am not asleep."

Hearing this Sumantra hurried from the palace. As he reached the public road, he found it decoarted with flags and flowers, and a joyous crowd had collected there and were talking about Rama.

Sumantra saw from a distance the beautiful castle of Rama, lofty and white as a peak of the Kailas. Its doors were yet closed, though the sun was up. Hundreds of daises were built about the palace, and there were several golden statues in front of the palace. Its gates were inlaid with various gems, and ornamented with wreaths of golden flowers and fine workmanship. Metallic images of tigers were kept here and there in the palace. The dazzling splendour of the palace never failed to attract public notice and being sprinkled with Aguru and Sandal it was rich with fragrance like the Dardura hill.

The citizens were waiting outside the gate with their offerings for the coronation ceremony. As soon as they saw Sumantra coming with a car, their minds leaped up in joy.

Sumantra then entered Rama's palace in a cheerful

mind and saw various people engaged in performing auspicious rites for Rama. Many people by that time were collected and their shouts of joy filled the place with a loud noise. People clad in their best apparels were going to and fro greatly elated with joy.

Then Sumantra entered the peaceful chamber of Rama. It was guarded cautiously by faithful young men with arms, and old women clad in red cloth were seated with rattans in their hands. They all stood up at Sumantra's sight. Sumantra then asked the warders to inform Rama of his arrival.

Sumantra was then ushered in before Rama. Rama was then dressed in an excellent apparel and was seated on a golden seat with a beautiful coverlet on it, like Kuvera, the god of wealth. His body was adorned with red sandal-paste, and Janaki was seated by his side with a chowri in her hand and at that time Rama looked like the Moon in the company of star Chitra. Rama shone like the mid-day Sun in his great splendour. Sumantra with a profound bow said in clasped palms, "Prince! king Dasaratha and queen Kaikeyi desire to see you, so please come with me."

Rama cheerfully stood up and addressing Janaki, said, "My darling, father and mother Kaikeyi are certainly talking about my installation. That dark-eyed queen is greatly devoted to the king, and always wishes my welfare. It is, therefore, that she is making this hurry. Father will invest me with the crown today. Pass your time in pleasant tete-a-tete with your maids. I shall soon come back."

Rama said this respectfully to Janaki, and Janaki followed him up to the gate.

On reaching the gate Janaki said :

"As Brahma conferred the kingdom of heaven on Indra, so the king will today confer on you the kingdom after the investiture ceremony. I wish to see you put on a deer-skin and carrying the horn of an antelope in your hand after being initiated in the investiture ceremony. May Indra protect you on the east, Yama on the south, Varuna on the west, and Kuvera on the north !"

After the performance of the benedictory rites Rama proceeded with Sumantra. Issuing from his palace, as a lion from its lair, Rama saw Lakshmana standing at the gate with clasped hands, and his friends collected in the inner apartment. He greeted them with sweet words and then got upon a lofty, golden chariot covered with tiger-skin, and drawn by strong horses like young elephants. By its dazzling glare it attracted the people's eyes. Being surrounded by a halo of glory, Rama came out of his palace as the moon emerges from the dark-blue clouds, and the chariot moved swiftly with a deep rumbling noise of a cloud. At that time Rama looked like a second Indra. Lakshmana stood by Rama with a chowri in his hand. A number of elephants and horses followed the car. Music, shouts, and loud huzzas were then continually heard. Beautiful damsels clad in their best apparels stood by the windows and began to shower flowers on the head of Rama, while others standing on the ground-floor discussed things concerning Rama. Some said, "Queen Kausalya has certainly been extremely delighted at Rama's coronation." Another said, "Sita is undoubtedly a gem of women. She had certainly practised

great penance in her former birth or she would not have got such a husband, as Rohini got the Moon as her lord." At some other place, throngs of people were talking about the coronation.

Rama, at last, reached the highway crowded with people, horses, elephants, and lined with shops full of merchandise. Flags were streaming from both sides of the road. At places, pearls and crystals were arranged in heaps or in other artistic forms. Every place was perfumed with Aguru and Sandal and was tastefully decorated with red cloth. And the wide road was strewn with flowers, fried paddy, curd, clarified butter, incense, and such other articles of auspicious rites.

Friends of Rama were exceedingly glad at his sight and they said, "Your illustrious ancestors ruled with great ability, but we hope that people will be more happy under your rule. Nothing is more welcome to us than the news of your installation to the throne."

After leaving temples, chaityas, and junctions of the roads on his left, Rama entered his father's palace. After passing through three rooms guarded by archers and another two rooms, he went to meet his father. The crowd outside waited for his return, as the ocean for the rising of the moon.

CHAPTER XI

THE INTERVIEW

When Rama appeared, king Dasaratha was seated on a sofa with Kaikeyi. He looked quite miserable and sad. Rama bowed at the feet of his father and respectfully greeted Kaikeyi.

Dasaratha then cast his eyes on Rama, and softly muttered, "Rama."

No sooner had he uttered, "Rama," than his eyes became wet with tears. He could no more look at Rama, nor he could speak with him.

Rama was greatly alarmed at this condition of the king. Dasaratha was heaving deep sighs of pain, and looked like a tempest-tossed ocean, or like the sun under eclipse. His glory was bedimmed like that of an ascetic speaking falsehood.

Rama seeing this unexpected sorrow of his father grew restless like a sea.

He asked to himself, "Why does he not look cheerful at my sight, as he was wont in the past?"

Rama then sorrowfully turned to Kaikeyi and said, "Mother, tell me, have I committed any offence through ignorance, for which father is angry with me? You please propitiate his anger and ask him to forgive me. He is ever affectionate to me, then why does he look so miserable today? Why does he not talk to me? Is he suffering from any physical or mental illness? Is it all well with my other mothers? I do not wish to live even for a moment by causing anger or dissatisfaction in my father's heart. Father is God himself, from whom one derives his being. Mother, have you said any hard words to him in your sullen mood? I am anxious to learn the truth. Please tell me why he has been overwhelmed with unforeseen sorrow?"

At this, shameless Kaikeyi said, "Oh Rama! the king is not angry, nor anything very particular has befallen him, but he cannot speak out his mind out of your fear. You are his most beloved son, and

he is unable to utter any unpleasant thing to you. But you ought to carry out what he has promised to me. Formerly, he had promised me two boons, but now he repents like a common person because I have now asked for them. It is not unknown to honest people that truth is the root of all religion. Just see that the king may not violate truth for you, being angry with me. If you agree to carry out without questioning what he may ask you to do, then I can tell you everything. The king himself will tell you all, but if you respectfully observe what I may speak on behalf of the king, then I can tell everything."

Hearing this Rama began with a sorrowful heart, "Mother, don't talk to me like this. At the mere words of the king I can enter into fire and drink poison. He is king, father and preceptor. I swear that I shall carry out what you ask me to do. Now tell me the desire of the king. Please know, that Rama never swerves from his words."

Then wicked Kaikeyi cruelly replied :

"Formerly in a fight between the Gods and the demons, your father received wounds all over the body. It was I who saved his life by nursing him day and night. For this he promised me two boons. I do now ask for them, and I have asked for Bharata's installation and your exile into Dandakaranya forest. My boy, if you be truthful and have the slightest regard for your father's promise, then you listen to my words and fulfil your father's promise. This very day you give up your idea of installation and repair to the forest for fourteen years with matted locks and wearing bark, and Bharata will be installed with those very articles

procured for your coronation. Let him rule over Ayodhya. This is my desire. This is why the king being overwhelmed with sorrow is unable to look at your face. You, therefore, carry out the king's words and redeem him from his promise."

Magnanimous Rama was not a bit pained at these cruel words. It was Dasaratha alone who was being distressed at the prospect of the separation from his beloved son.

Rama then calmly replied, "Very good, I shall from this place proceed direct to the forest. But I am eager to know why the king is not talking to me as he used to do in the past. Be not angry, mother, I swear to you that I shall repair to the forest as desired. What can I not ungrudgingly perform, when ordered by my father and the king? I am only sorry that the king has not himself spoken anything about the installation of Bharata. Not to speak of the royal command, for your benefit and father's pledge I can cheerfully bestow the kingdom and my everything on Bharata. I can even give away Sita. I find the king feeling diffident and shy, please assure him.

"Why has he fixed his look on the ground, and is shedding silent tears? Even today envoys on swift horses will be sent to Bharata to fetch him from his maternal uncle's house, and I shall repair to the Dandaka forest for fourteen years in an unwavering mind."

Kaikeyi was delighted at these words and she urged on Rama saying, "Let messengers be immediately sent to Bharata. It is not proper for you to delay any further, soon leave for the forest. The king does not

speak to you from shame. Remove his miseries now. Unless you depart from his presence he won't have his food or bath."

"O shame! What a pity!" With these words Dasaratha fainted on the golden sofa.

Raising up the king, Rama hurried about his departure to the forest as a horse spurred by a whip.

Rama then gently said to Kaikeyi:

"O venerable lady! I do not wish to live a selfish life. I love religion like a Rishi, and there is no greater religion than to serve one's father and to carry out his orders. I can sacrifice my life for the satisfaction of my father. Now I shall live for fourteen years in the forest just for your wish, even without the orders of the king. Since you have every authority on me and requested the king about this, it is apparent that nothing of me is unknown to you. I shall even now leave for the forest after taking mother's permission and consoling Sita.

"Now please see to Bharata's installation and to my father's comfort. Serving the father is the highest duty of the son."

At these words Dasaratha's sorrow was doubly increased, and being unable to speak he began to cry aloud. Then Rama after bowing at the feet of his father and Kaikeyi, and after going round the two out of respect he came out of the chamber.

Heroic Lakshmana having overheard everything was beside himself in rage and followed Rama with tearful eyes. Rama never cast his eyes towards the place full of articles for his installation. He was by nature beautiful, so the loss of the kingdom could not

affect the beauty of his face, as the waning of the moon does not rob it of its beauty.

There was no change in him for leaving aside the royal umbrella and his friends and relations. Nobody could see any mark of sorrow on his countenance. As the moon never sheds his lustre, so his natural cheerfulness did not leave him. Rama entered the inner quarters of the palace to convey this unpleasant news to his mother. At that time Kausalya was engaged in various festive ceremonies about the installation of Rama. Rama bore everything calmly, but he was troubled by the thought that his parents might die for his separation from them.

CHAPTER XII

THE FATAL NEWS

At last the news of his exile and the loss of kingdom spread in the inner sections of the palace, and the queens and other royal dames began to lament bitterly saying, that Rama who used to serve them even without his father's direction, who looked upon them as his mothers, who never grew angry when abused, who had sweet words for all and tried to please everybody—alas, that Rama was going to the forest. King Dasaratha was a fool or he would not have forsaken such a son.

Rama heaved deep sigh at these lamentations of the women and at last reached his mother's quarters on front of which many were seated. They blessed Rama as soon as he arrived there. After passing through different apartments he came to his mother's

chamber, where his arrival was announced to Kausalya by some women.

At that time Kausalya was worshipping Vishnu for the welfare of his son. Rama saw there grains, sweet-meats, clarified butter, garlands of white flowers, fried paddy, payasa (rice boiled with sugar and milk), sesamum peas, sacrificial fuel, filled up pitchers and other articles for offering oblations.

At the sight of Rama Kausalya came near him, and Rama bowed to her feet. She hugged Rama to her bosom and smelt his head out of deep affection. Kausalya said, "The king is true to his words, and he will confer on you the crown today." Saying this she offered Rama a seat and asked him to partake something.

Rama then in clasped palms said, Mother, you know not what great calamity is suspending on you, Janaki and Lakshmana. I do not require such seat any more, for I am just now bound for the forest. I shall start for the Dandakaranya immediately, and there shall live for fourteen years on fruits and roots. Father has ordered my exile and Bharata's installation."

Hearing this Kausalya fainted on the ground like a tree fallen by an axe. She had never suffered in life. Rama quickly raised her from the ground and brushed off the dust from her body.

Kausalya then with great difficulty said, "Oh Rama, if you were not born today, I would have been a sonless woman but not subject to severe sorrow as this. My only grief would have been my barrenness. I have never received any caress out of hope that all my sorrows would be over by the birth of a son. But

alas, I shall now have to bear slight and insult of my co-wives, and nothing is more painful to woman than to bear the gibes of co-wives. I do not find a more wretched creature than myself, know not what will happen after your departure to the forest. Knowing that my husband is averse to me, even the maids of Kaikeyi will not spare to insult me, and Kaikeyi is always in fretful temper. Seventeen years have passed after your investiture of sacred thread. All these years I have passed in deluding hopes. I shall not be able to bear such intense sorrow. All my efforts have been in vain. My heart is now overflowed with sorrow as a stream during the rains. I am really wretched, for death will not take me to his dreadful abode. My heart seems to be made of steel or it would have broken, when I fell down on hearing the painful news. It is apparent, death never comes before its due hour. What more charm I have in my life? I shall follow you to the forest as the cow follows its calf. All my prayers to the Gods for my son's welfare have been fruitless like seeds thrown upon a barren soil." Kausalya was thus crying bitterly when Lakshmana tried to console her with fitting words:

"O-reverend lady! it is not proper that Rama should renounce the throne and go into exile. The king has grown mentally weak and old. He is uxorious and is completely under the influence of a woman. For what offence Rama should be banished from the kingdom? I have not come across anybody even amongst his enemies who can speak about his fault. He is faultless, mighty and without any greed. He has love

even for his enemies. Who can forsake such a son ? The king, it seems, has become indiscreet like a child. What son will obey his words, considering the conduct of the previous kings ? O worshipful one, before the people come to know the news of your exile, secure the kingdom with my help. Who can prevent your installation when I shall be by your side with my bow and arrows like unto Death itself ? If I see any indication of any disturbance I shall put to death every one of Ayodhya. I shall surely kill him today who will take us Bharata's side.

"Know it for certain that gentleness is the cause of defeat or discomfiture. What shall I say more, if father being incited by Kaikeyi stands in the way. I shall not hesitate even to kill him. It is proper to chastise even the spiritual guide, if he loses his judgment and be vain. By seniority of birth the kingdom belongs to you. Then for what reason or precedent he can deprive you of the throne ? I tell you openly that nobody will succeed in installing Bharata by opposing you and me.

"I love Rama with all my heart, and I swear by my bow and all that is dear to me, that if Rama enters into fire or into the forest, I shall be the first to thrust myself there. I shall remove your difficulties by my prowess as the sun dispels all darkness. Yourself and worshipful Rama will witness my prowess. I shall even now kill that old father enamoured of Kaikeyi, and who has grown foolish like a child in spite of age."

Hearing these words of heroic Lakshmana, Kausalya with tearful eyes addressing Rama said :

"You have heard what Lakshmana has just now

said. If you approve of it, act accordingly. You should not leave your mother in distress by listening to the unjust words of her co-wife Kaikeyi. If you are anxious for righteousness, you will be able to acquire immense virtue by serving me by stopping at home. The great sage Kasyapa attained heaven by serving his mother, remaining at home. In point of respect and veneration, I am adorable to you as the king himself. I shall never permit you to go to the forest. I would prefer to live on mere potherbs¹ with you. I do not wish for happiness, nor want to live in your absence. If you leave me in such distressing sorrow, I shall give up my life by observing the vow of fast. Then you shall suffer for the sin of inflicting agonies on your mother, as the God Ocean was subjected to the torments of hell for inflicting pain on his mother." Hearing his mother speaking thus, Rama gently replied :

"Mother ! it is beyond my power to disobey my father's orders. I entreat you by your feet, please permit me to repair to the forest. Formerly, Rishi Kundu killed a cow at the words of his father, though he knew it to be a sin. In our line, the sons of Sagara dug the earth at the command of their father. Rama, the son of Jamadagni, at the words of his father decapitated his mother by the stroke of an axe in the forest. I am only following the examples of these great men. Mother, it is one's duty to obey his father. Please do not consider it impious. One does not lose his merit by obeying his father."

Then turning to Lakshmana magnanimous Rama

1 Poor vegetable diet.

said, "Lakshmana ! I know you love me deeply. I am also aware of your valour and irresistible might. Mother is overwhelmed with grief at the news of my exile. But religion is the highest thing in the world, and that religion is based on truth. The behest of my father appertains to that truth. So when I have got the permission and order of my father and of mother Kaikeyi, I cannot desist from proceeding to the forest. I therefore ask you to give up this mean Kshatriya vanity. Please follow my words."

Rama again turned to his mother and said in clasped hands :

"O worshipful lady ! allow me to proceed to the forest. I entreat you, not to stand in my way. I shall come back home being absolved from the vow, as Yayati returned from the heaven. Yourself, myself, Janaki, Lakshmana and mother Sumitra should do what the king asks us to do. Now grieve no more, do not desist from the rites of installation, and from following what is right."

When Rama said all these in an undisturbed heart, Kausalya fixed her gaze on Rama and said :

"My boy, I have reared you up with affection and love, and like the king I am equally adorable to you. How can you leave me then ? It is better to renounce everything else but you."

Rama grew indignant at these words and he abiding in righteousness, seeing his mother almost senseless in grief, and Lakshmana too overwhelmed with sorrow, addressed them with words worthy of him :

"Lakshmana, I am fully aware of your valour and of your deep attachment for me. But I ask you again

and again not to put me into great pain by siding along with the mother, failing to understand my motive.

"When the time comes for reaping the fruits of acts done in a prior life ; righteousness, wealth and objects of desire are obtained, so the act that secures all these three is most desirable like a loving and obedient wife with issue. But the performance of an act which is not conducive to virtue is not good. One should act what leads to righteousness. He who grows selfish by neglecting righteousness becomes an object of public derision. And any desire that goes against righteousness cannot be regarded as commendable or right. Our aged father is our preceptor in arms as well as in other things. Who having any regard for righteousness will not disobey his orders, though they may be given from anger, joy or lust ? For this I cannot act against my father's vow. The king is our father and he has fullest authority over us. The king is still alive and he is ready to observe truth even by forsaking his son. In this circumstances, mother, like any other helpless woman, may accompany me, if she likes. Let her, therefore, permit me to repair to the forest and bless me, so that I may come back after staying the period of vow. I cannot sacrifice good name for a kingdom. Life is not everlasting, so I would not wish to acquire even the world by any unjust means."

Thus saying the foremost of men, Rama, thought of leaving the place by consoling his mother.

But Lakshmana brooding over Rama's exile and loss of the kingdom was overwhelmed with grief. His eyes expanded in anger and he looked like an infuriated elephant.

Gentle Rama then addressing him said, "Now do not cherish any anger, sorrow, or insult in your heart. Do away patiently and cheerfully with all the preparations that have been made for the investiture ceremony but make preparations for my repairing to the forest.

"Act in such a manner that mother Kaikeyi who was greatly alarmed at the news of my installation may be assured. I cannot overlook the sorrow that has been caused in her mind from the apprehension of mischief to her. I don't remember to have ever offended my father or mother. Father is truthful and true to his vows. He has been greatly alarmed by the thought of the next world. Let all his fears be removed. If I do not so act, father will be sorry when he will find that his promise has not been fulfilled, and his sorrows will greatly pain my heart. It is for this that I intend to leave the city immediately renouncing the throne. In my departure Kaikeyi will achieve her object and will safely install Bharata on the throne. She will be able to live happily after my exile to the forest. He who has inspired Kaikeyi with this desire has also kept her firm in her determination. I cannot offend the worshipful lady in any way. I shall immediately proceed to the forest. Fate is responsible for this loss of kingdom and my banishment. It is due to fate that Kaikeyi has been so prejudiced against me, or she would not have been so intent on inflicting miseries on me. You know I have never made any invidious distinction between the mothers. Kaikeyi too never made any difference between myself and Bharata. It is, therefore, nothing but destiny that has made her to press cruelly for my banishment. Kaikeyi is an accomplished, good-natured

lady. Why should she at all use unpleasant words before her husband unless goaded by fate? What is beyond comprehension or unthinkable is Destiny. Rulers of created beings, even Brahma and other Gods, cannot override fate. It is this inexorable fate that has brought about change in Kaikeyi's mind and my loss of kingdom. Who dares stand against destiny known to us only through its consequences, but otherwise unknown? Destiny is the mysterious root cause of all happiness, sorrow, fear, anger, loss, gain, subjection and deliverance. It is due to destiny that great ascetics sometimes succumb to passion or anger. It is only for destiny, works already begun are suddenly interrupted and unforeseen events follow.

"Lakshmana! if you can now console yourself with this thought for this interruption to the installation, you will hardly have any cause for regret. Cast off your sorrow by following my advice and dissuade others to take any part in my installation. Water brought for my coronation will do the bathing ceremony necessary for being initiated to the vow of asceticism. Nay, I must not look to these things. I shall myself draw water from a well and take my bath for my initiation to forest-life.

"Don't be sorry, brother, because I could not secure the throne. Of kingdom and forest I would prefer the last. Now you see how powerful is destiny. You shouldn't therefore, any more blame younger mother and father smitten by fate."

CHAPTER XIII

LAKSHMANA'S REPLY

Rama having said this, Lakshmana was suddenly placed between grief and joy. He thought for sometime with a downcast look, and then knitting his brows in a frown, began to breathe hard like a panting snake. At that time it was hard to look at his face which grew terrible like that of an angry lion. Then after throwing his arms, as an elephant does its trunk, with a shrug of his shoulders and looking at askance returned :

"Arya ! you have been eager to go to the forest for two reasons—to avoid transgression of virtue and to set your example before the people to enable them to stick to their honour. But you are labouring under a delusion. Had it not been so, you would not have spoken like this. You can easily overcome your fate, then why do you sing hymns of praise to worthless and wretched Destiny ? The king and queen Kaikeyi are highly vicious, how can't you then be sure about their viciousness ? Don't you know that many people only feign righteousness ? Look, how the king and Kaikeyi for selfish motives are deceitfully forsaking a son like you ! If their intentions were not to cheat you by fraud, they would not have set up obstacles after making preparations for the installation.

"If this story of the promised boons were true, why it is not given out before the preparation made for the installation ? It is, however, highly unjust to install the younger by overriding the elder. I can't brook this heinous affair. You will kindly forgive me what I may say from sorrow. I hate that religion that has fascinated you so much and produced this vacillation. You are

capable of action, then why should you obey the words of the luxurious king? Promising of boons is a mere plea to thwart your installation. But my great sorrow is that you do not admit it to be such. This virtuous tendency in you is certainly reprehensible. People will speak ill of you if you repair to the forest leaving the kingdom without any just cause.

"The king and Kaikeyi always try to do mischief to us. Nobody except you is willing to carry out their wishes. They have put obstacles to your installation, but you consider it to be fate. I entreat you to give up this evil faith. Such destiny does not commend to me. Those who are weak and powerless follow destiny, but those who are heroes and whose valour is praised by the people, never pay any heed to destiny. He who can conquer fate by his manliness is never cast down by sufferings or loss. Arya, today the world will witness the prowess of both manliness and fate. Those who find your installation thwarted by fate, will see that fate defeated by my manliness. Today, I shall assail fate like an unrestrained infuriated elephant and conquer it by my might. Not to speak of king Dasaratha alone, but even the whole world won't be able to prevent your installation. I shall send them to the forest for fourteen years who has sanctioned you exile. I shall root out the hopes of the king and of Kaikeyi for the installation of Bharata at your cost. Surely destiny will not bring that amount of happiness to him who will stand against me, as the miseries to be inflicted by my unbearable might.

"Oh Arya, if you repair to the forest after thousand years, your sons will then occupy the throne. It is

desirable to retire into solitude by following the examples of the former kings, by making over the kingdom to his son when he is incapable of governing the people as his own children. Don't refuse the throne fearing that you may lose it again for the fickleness of the king. I swear to protect your kingdom or I may not attain the region of the heroes after death. I shall guard your throne as the shore guards the sea. Now get yourself initiated with auspicious rites. If the princes and rulers stand in the way, I shall alone be able to subdue them. These arms of mine are not intended only to contribute to the beauty of my person, this bow is not meant for an ornament, this sword and shafts are not meant for felling and carrying woods. Don't think it to be so. These four are meant for the destruction of enemies. If Indra, the carrier of thunderbolt, now stands against me, I shall hack him to pieces by this sword flaming like the lightning. Who will be able to resist me when I shall appear on the field with bow in hand and putting on the glove of lizard-skin for the protection of the fingers? My shafts will pierce through the vital parts of men, elephants and horses. I shall display my feats of arms for destroying the supremacy of the king and for establishing that of mine. The hands that are besmeared with sandal-paste, wear bracelets, distribute wealth and maintain friends and relations, will perform deeds worthy of them, by suppressing all those who wanted to put obstacles to your installation. Now tell me which of your enemy will be severed from his life, wealth and friends? I am your servant, just order me and I shall try to bring the whole world under your sway."

Hearing these words of Lakshmana, Rama the chief of the descendants of Raghu, consoled him again and again and by repeatedly wiping off tears from Lakshmana's eyes said :

"I think the best course for me is to obey my father's orders."

Then queen Kausalya finding Rama bent upon carrying out his father's wishes, said with a voice choked with tears :

"Alas ! how shall he who is born of the king and of me live on mendicancy ? Certainly, Destiny is all-powerful or why should Rama be sent into exile ?

"My boy ! as fire in the summer burns all trees and plants, so this flame of sorrow is consuming my heart ; your absence will fan that flame ; miseries are its fuels, tears are its oblations, and the vapour of cloudy thoughts is its smoke. I shall follow you wherever you may go, as the cow follows its calf."

The foremost of men, Rama, hearing his afflicted mother speaking thus, said :

"Mother ! the king has already been duped and put into great miseries by Kaikeyi. I am now going to the forest, and if you accompany me the king will surely die.

"There is nothing more cruel for a woman than to desert her husband. Don't entertain this odious thought. You should serve father so long he lives. This is your duty !"

At this Kausalya of auspicious look gracefully said :

"To attend upon and to serve one's husband is no doubt the highest duty of women."

Virtuous Rama finding his mother approving his

words, said, "Mother ! the king is your husband, and my father the foremost object of reverence ; besides he is the master of all, and it is my duty as well as yours to carry out his words. And I assure you that I shall come back after fourteen years."

Affectionate Kausalya sorrowfully replied, "I shall not be able to live amongst the co-wives in your absence. If the king has ordered you exile to the forest, take me along with you."

Thus saying Kausalya began to cry bitterly. But Rama being unmoved said :

"So long a woman lives, her husband is her only master. The king can, therefore, treat with us in any way he likes. Bharata is virtuous and of sweet speech ; he will surely try to please you in every possible way. Now please see that the king may not be overwhelmed with sorrow in my absence. My absence will be unbearable to him, please see that nothing fatal happens to him. It is your duty to minister to the aged king. The woman who does not serve her husband even though engaged in fasts and other religious rites, shall fare badly in the next world, but one attains heaven by serving her husband. Even to her who does not feel inclined to worship or bow to the Gods, the best thing is to serve her husband. This is the duty of a woman as prescribed by the Vedas and the Smritis. Dost thou now in expectation of my return pass your time by doing religious acts. After my return you will reap its fruits if the king survives."

Being thus consoled by Rama, Kausalya said with tears, "Since you have so resolved, it is beyond my power to dissuade you. Perhaps it is impossible to

avoid the inevitable separation. Good betide you. All my miseries will be over when you come back, it is destiny that is sending you to the forest without caring for my entreaties. Go but come back safely. Heaven knows whether I shall ever witness your return."

CHAPTER XIV

KAUSALYA'S LEAVE

Kausalya then subduing her sorrows performed several rites for the welfare of Rama. Then addressing Rama, she said, "You go now, but please return soon. Let virtue, which you have so cheerfully decided to follow, protect you ; let the gods, whom you everyday adore, protect you in the forest ; let the weapons of wise Viswamitra defend you ; may you be protected by your devotion to truth and to your parents ; may the sacred ruel, sacrificial grass, holy altars, mountains, trees, lakes, birds, snakes and lions protect you. Let Siddhas, Viswedevas, Maruta, ascetics, Pusa, Bhaga, Aryama, the Lokapalas,¹ six seasons, months, days, nights, Srutis, Smritis, Skanda, Soma, Vrihaspati, Saptarshi, Narada and others protect you. When you will go to the forest, may Heaven, Sky, Earth, Air, movable and immovable things with their presiding deities protect you there. Cruel Rakshasas and Pisachas live in the forest. Let not monkeys, scorpions, reptiles, insects, elephants, tigers, bears, hogs, buffaloes do you any injury. May no cannibal hurt you for my prayer ; may Sukra, Soma,

¹ Ruler of various regions. Pusa = sun. Bhaga = moon. Aryama = spirit of the ancestors.

Surya, Kuvera, Yama, Agni, Dhuma and Mantras uttered by Rishis, and the Lord of Creation protect you."

Large-eyed Kausalya then began to worship the gods with perfumes and garlands of flowers, and for the well-being of Rama she got the Brahmins to offer oblations to the fire. After the offering of oblations she gave the Brahmins, Madhuparka¹ and they uttered blessings on Rama.

Then Kausalya blessed Rama saying, "May that blessing betide you which in the day of yore crowned Indra at the destruction of Vritra." Thus saying Kausalya blessed Rama by placing grains on his head, besmeared his body with fragrant substance and by uttering Mantras she tied in his hands well-tested amulets and a twig of auspicious 'Visalya Karani'.

She embraced Rama again and said in a faltering voice, choked with tears, "You may now go where you like; I shall be glad to see you coming back after attaining your object in healthy body, and my prayers protect you."

Rama then bowed to his mother and after going round her left the place for Janaki's quarters.

CHAPTER XV

JANAKI

Here Janaki did not know anything about Rama's exile. She was rather steeped in joy for Rama's installation. After worshipping the deities in due form she was waiting for Rama, when Rama entered with his head hanging down in shame.

¹ Madhuparka = a cup containing curd, clarified butter and honey.

Seeing her husband quite anxious and sad, she tremblingly rose from her seat, and Rama's internal sorrows could no longer remain concealed before Janaki. They were quite evident from his looks and gestures.

Finding Rama thus cast down, Janaki sorrowfully said, "Why is this change in you? Today the Pushya is joined with the moon, and the planet Vrihaspati is presiding over this union. The day has been declared auspicious for your installation bywise Brahmanas, then why do you look so sad? Why your charming countenance has not been placed under the shadow of a white umbrella with hundred spikes? Why the servant do not fan you with chowries white as the swan and the moon? Why the birds and panegyrists do not sing your praise? Why the Brahmanas versed in Vedas do not sprinkle curd and honey on your head? Why the citizens and villagers and chief courtiers do not follow you in their best costumes? Why the best chariot has not been yoked with four swift horses? Why mountain-like dark elephant does not proceed before you? Why do not the servants carry golden seat ahead of you? When all things are ready for the installation, why your face has grown pale and why that sweet smile is no more visible?"

Rama then gently returned, "Janaki, worshipful father has banished me to the forest. Let me tell you the trend of events that has led to this destiny of mine.

"Truthful father once promised two boons to queen Kaikeyi. When the king thought of installing me on the throne, Kaikeyi reminded him of his promise and asked for my exile for fourteen years. The kingdom now belongs to Bharata. The king was bound by truth

and could no more swerve from it. I am now going to the forest. I have therefore come to see you once. Take care, do not praise me in the presence of Bharata, for those who are wealthy cannot bear another's praise. Bharata is now the king. It is your duty to please him. I am going to the forest for my father's vow. Don't be anxious, when I repair to the forest; pass your days by observing religious vows and fast. Rise every day early in the morning, worship the gods properly, and bow down at the feet of my father. My mother has been greatly afflicted with sorrow and in her last stage you should serve her respectfully. All my mothers used to love me and feed me equally, and you should bow to them every day. You should look upon dear Bharata and Satrugna as your sons. Bharata is now the lord of our family and the kingdom; don't injure him in any way. Kings are propitiated by devotion and service, but become angry if any thing occurs on the contrary. I therefore ask you to live here following Bharata's wishes and commands. I am now going to the forest, and my request to you is that you should not neglect any of my aforesaid words."

Then sweet-tongued Janaki replied with an offended air, "Why do you think me so mean that you speak thus? It is difficult to restrain laughter at your words. Your words are unworthy of a hero versed in the sacred lore. They are infamous. To speak the truth, it is not proper to listen to them.

"My Lord, father, mother, son, brother, daughter-in-law, all of them reap the consequences of their own acts: it is wife alone that shares in the fate of her husband. When you have been ordered to go in exile

to the Dandaka forest, my banishment too has, in fact been ordained. Not to speak of other relations, a woman cannot alone save herself ; husband is her mainstay in this world as well as in the next. A woman should always take shelter at the feet of her husband, though he may be deprived of heaven-like lofty position. Father and mother have advised me to follow the husband in prosperity as well as in adversity. If you repair to the forest, I shall go in front of you and make path by treading the thorns under my feet. Don't be angry that I could not comply with your request. Take me with you as the travellers take the remnants of their drink along with them. I have committed no such offence to you that you want to leave me here. I do not care for all the wealth of the world but your company. You must not protest against what I wish to do in this matter.

"My lord, I have been eager to serve you like a nun in the forest, inhabited by tigers and deer, and rendered fragrant by the sweet perfume of flowers. I desire to bathe everyday in lakes and pools strewn with full-blown lotuses and rendered vocal by the notes of swans and other aquatic birds. I shall tend you in the deep forest full of wild animals and carry out your wishes as I would do in my father's house. I shall without any fear visit the mountains, lakes and other wild scenery with you. I know you will be able to maintain me even in the forest. Not to speak of me, you are capable of shouldering the burden of an unlimited number. I shall not therefore leave your company, nor you will be able to dissuade me anyhow. I shall go ahead of you and when hungry shall feed upon wild roots and fruits, and

shall never trouble you for better food. I shall feel no sorrow in thus passing a long time with you.

"My Lord, I am fully resolved. If you leave me now, I shall put an end to my life. Please comply with my request, take me along with you and you will never feel inconvenience for that."

Virtuous Rama thinking of the hardships of a forest-life was not willing to take Sita with him and he tried to dissuade her with consoling words.

Rama said, "Janaki, you are born in a noble family and you have virtuous instincts in you. You wait here in my expectation and observe religious practices. I shall then be happy. I am telling you this considering what is good for you. You give up your resolve. The forest-life is full of hardships and miseries. There, roarings of the lions from the mountain-caves being mingled with the sounds of the cataracts will deafen the ears. Fierce animals prowling fearlessly in the forests will attack us at our very sight. There the rivers are muddy, and full of crocodiles and sharks, which even the infuriated elephants cannot easily cross. The paths are tangled with thorns and creepers, and drinking water is not always available. There, after a day's sojourn you will have to lie down on a bed of mere leaves cast from the tree, and shall have to appease your hunger by picking up fruits that have fallen on the ground from their stalks. In the forest, one has to fast, wear matted locks and barks and has to adore the Gods and the Spirit of the ancestors everyday and to receive the guests hospitably. And observing the rules of asceticism one has to bathe thrice daily and offer flowers on the sacred altar by culling them with

one's own hand. Strong blasts of wind blow there day and night shaking the long grasses and the branches of thorny trees. There, the nights are pitch-dark and various kinds of reptiles roar there freely.

"Sometime big pythons living in the beds of the rivers with zigzag course like that of a stream obstruct the way. There you will have to bear always the bites of scorpions, insects, flies and mosquitoes. So forest is full of miseries. There you will have to devote yourself to penance and have to be bold even in the presence of objects of fear. I therefore tell you that there is no happiness in forest-life and I dissuade you from going there. Forest-life won't suit you, and I clearly foresee that there are great possibilities of danger to you."

Then Sita broke forth in tears, "My Lord, since love for you goads me to proceed forward, the evils enumerated by you are of little consequence to me. I know, every one is afraid of you, so the lions, tigers, elephants, - and Yaks will run away at your sight. Let me now take leave of my superiors and accompany you. Separation from you will be unbearable to me, and I shall surely commit suicide. The miseries that you have now spoken about forest-life have no force. A woman cannot live without her husband. This is what you yourself have said at the time of instructing me. Hence the best possible course for me is to accompany you. Besides, I have heard from the astrologers in my paternal house that it is destined that I shall live in the forest, and from that time I have been desirous of living there. Their prediction must be fulfilled, and time has come for its fulfilment. You permit me, and let the words of those Brahmanas be true. A man who

has not succeeded in subduing his senses may suffer if his wife be not with him in the forest. But you are above all temptations and frailties. I have heard that when I was a girl, a virtuous woman came to my mother and told about my banishment in the forest. Her words cannot be false. I have been extremely desirous of going to the forest. And before this I had requested you on several occasions to take me to the forest, and you too agreed to that. This is why the forest-life appears so agreeable to me. Husband is the highest god to the wife, so I wish to follow you cheerfully. Not to speak of this world, even in the next world your company will be dear to me. I have heard from famous Brahmanas that she who has been given away to another with religious rites as wife, will belong to him even in the next world. For what reasons you are unwilling to take your devoted wife with you? I feel happy in your happiness, sorry in your sorrows and am solely devoted to you. I therefore, humbly entreat you to make me your companion. If you do not take this unfortunate self with you, I shall surely put an end to my life either by drinking poison or by entering into fire."

Thus Janaki entreated, but Rama did not consent to her words. Sita was then overwhelmed with grief, and tears flooded her bosom.

Then afflicted Sita tauntingly remarked with a laugh, "If father knew that you are a man only in form but in nature a woman, he would not have certainly conferred me on you. People say that in prowess Rama is more unbearable than the blazing Sun. But this is a false talk.

"Why are you so sad? For which fear you are willing to leave your devoted wife? Know me as devoted to you as Savitri to Satyabana, the son of Dyumatsena. I have never seen another man's face even in thought, like one bringing shame to her line.

"I shall, therefore, accompany you. You have married me knowing me to be chaste and I have been long living in your abode. Is it proper for you to hand me over to another person like one living by the sale of his wife?

"My Lord, you may live here being obedient to that Bharata, whose welfare you always wish, for whom you have been deprived of your kingdom. But you won't be able to persuade me to do so. I tell you again and again that I shall accompany you and live with you, be it for penance, be it in the forest, or in the heaven. I do not waver for a moment. When I shall go after you I shall feel no exhaustion from walking but will feel as if lying on a luxurious bed. I shall feel the pricks of Kasa, Kusa, Sara, Isika and other thorny weeds and thistles as soft as linen and deer-skin. I shall consider the dust that may cover me, being raised by the storm, as the best sandal-paste. When I shall lie down on the green grass of the forest, it will be more pleasant than the variegated blanket spread over a bedstead. Fruits, roots and leaves that you may gather for me, be they scanty or profuse, I shall relish them as sweet as nectar. I shall enjoy myself with the fruits and flowers of the six seasons. I shall not be anxious for my parents nor shall ever think of home.

"I won't trouble you in the least because I shall live far off from these things. I, therefore, entreat you to

take me along with you. Please know it that your presence is a heaven unto me, and your absence is hell. What to speak more, I won't find any evil in forest-life. If you do not take me with you I shall never live here under the subjection of Bharata. My lord, if you go to the forest, it will be impossible for me to survive your separation. Not to speak of fourteen years, I won't be able to bear your separation even for a moment."

Janaka's daughter was extremely pained by Rama's dissuasion as a young she-elephant smarts in pain when pierced by poisonous shafts. After lamenting thus bitterly, she deeply embraced her husband and began to cry aloud. Her eyes began to shed long confined tears as an Arani wood¹ emits fire. Crystal drops of tears began to roll down her cheeks, and the moon-like beautiful face of the large-eyed damsel grew pale like a lotus torn from its stem.

Rama finding Janaki almost fainting in grief, threw his arms round her neck and consoling her said, "O worshipful lady! I do not crave even heavenly bliss by giving you pain. Of course, like the self-create Brahma, I have nothing to fear from, nor that I am unable to protect you; but as I did not know your mind, so I did not agree to take you with me.

"Now I find that you are fully resolved to accompany me to the forest, so I cannot leave you, as one

1 A piece of wood by which fire was produced, by rubbing it against another piece of wood at the time of sacrifice. In the Rig Veda one piece has been described as male (Pururava) and the other piece as female (Urvashi). Thus fire was produced by their friction.

possessing self-knowledge cannot forsake generosity. Formerly, many royal saints repaired to the forest with their wives and I shall follow their examples. You now follow me as the queen of light Suvarchala follows the sun. When father being bound by truth asks me to repair to the forest, I can no more sit idle. The duty of the son is to obey his parents, and I don't wish to live by violating that supreme duty. Destiny is beyond the range of experience : it can be adored only by meditations and prayers. But father is living-God and it is not proper to slight him for unknown destiny. By worshipping the father one in fact worships all, and wealth, virtue and objects of desire are gained by it. There is no higher sacred duty than this. Devotion to truth, charity and sacrifice are not equal to this duty.

"Those who obey their parents attain heavenly and other excellent regions. Therefore to carry out the behest of my truthful father is my duty and religion. I was not at first inclined to take you to the Dandaka forest, but since you are resolved, I must take you with me. My darling, you have decided what is best, and it is worthy of our line. Now make arrangements for repairing to the forest. Distribute alms to the beggars and jewels to the Brahmanas. Give to the Brahmanas your valuable ornaments, clothes, toys, beautiful beds and other articles that belong to you and me, and distribute the remainder amongst the servants. Get yourself immediately ready. There shouldn't be any more delay "

Janaki then being delighted by Rama's permission began to give away everything in charity in cheerful mind.

CHAPTER XVI

LAKSHMANA'S ENTREATIES

Lakshmana who had been there from before began to weep hearing the conversation between the two and considering that Rama's separation would be quite unbearable to him he caught hold of Rama's feet and entreatingly said :

"Arya ! if you are thus resolved to repair into the forest full of wild animals, then I shall go ahead of you with bow in my hand, and you will roam about with me in charming parts of the forest. Being separated from you, I do not wish for heavenly bliss or immortality, nor all the wealth of the triple world."

Rama finding Lakshmana too eager to follow him dissuaded him again and again with consoling words. But Lakshmana was resolute, and said, "Formerly you asked me to follow you, but why do you prevent me now ?"

Then gentle Rama told him, "Lakshmana ! you are virtuous, sober, and always follow the right path. I love you dearly. You are my friend, and obedient to me. If you accompany me to the forest, then who will look after Kausalya and Sumitra ? He who could do so is under Kaikeyi's influence. When Kaikeyi will secure the kingdom, there will be no end of miseries to the co-wives. And Bharata after his installation will side with his mother, and he will never think about Kausalya and Sumitra.¹ This is why I ask you to remain here somehow and maintain them. Great merit is

¹ The words are intended to dissuade Lakshmana and do not represent Rama's real opinion

acquired by serving the superiors ; you, therefore, take charge of my mother on my behalf. If we all leave her thus she can't be happy by any means."

Lakshmana then humbly replied, "O hero, Bharata will maintain Kausalya and Sumitra from fear of you. I shall surely kill him if he slights them from haughtiness or any evil motive. Moreover, Kausalya who has made grants of number of villages to her servants, can maintain thousands like us and will have enough to maintain herself and my mother. Now, you please give me leave to follow you. It does not mean any violation of duty ; besides my desires shall be fulfilled. I shall go before you as your guide with stringed bow, a hoe and a basket in my hands. Everyday I shall procure for you wild roots and fruits on which the ascetics live. You will enjoy yourself with Vaidehi in the hills and I shall do everything else whether you be awake or asleep."

Rama was greatly pleased with Lakshmana's words and said, "You then take permission of your near and dear ones. At the sacrifice of Janaka, high-souled Varuha presented me two sets of formidable bows and weapons ; namely, impenetrable mails, inexhaustible quivers and arrows and two swords glittering as the sun. I have kept these in the house of my preceptor. Please go and fetch them quickly."

Then heroic Lakshmana took leave of his relations and speedily brought forth the arms from the preceptor's house. Rama was glad at this and he asked Lakshmana to distribute his riches to the Brahmanas and other dependants, asked him to fetch swiftly worshipful Sujajna, the son of Vasishttha, as he wanted soon to repair to the forest after greeting him duly.

Lakshmana then went to Sujajna's house and asked him to come to Rama.

Sujajna then appeared, and Rama stood up with Sita and greeted the Brahmana versed in the Vedas, and effulgent like a flame of fire. After offering him excellent ornaments, bracelets, ear-rings, pearl-necklace stuck with golden threads, and other jewels, Rama conveying Vaidehi's wish to Sujajna said, "My friend! go and give this necklace and collar to your wife. Janaki, my companion in forest-life, also presents to your wife a girdle, bracelets, armlets and a bed-stead inlaid with various gems.

"Please accept them. And I offer to you the great elephant called Satrunjaya which I got from my maternal uncle. Please take it."

Sujajna accepted the presents and blessed them whole-heartedly. Rama then asked Lakshmana to offer to sages Agastya and Viswamitra gold, silver and thousands of kine with meet adoration, and to give silken cloths, maid-servants, conveyances to the preceptor and Taitiriya portion of the Veda who came everyday to bless Kausalya.

"Worshipful Chaitraratha," said Rama, "is our charioteer and counsellor. He has grown very old. Give him sufficient jewels, precious cloths and a sufficient number of cattle. There are number of Brahmanas under my protection studying Katha portion of the Veda. They are always engaged in their studies. Therefore they cannot attend to any other work. They have great desire for good food but they are indolent. Give them eighty camel-load of jewels, thousand bulls, and a large number of cows for milk, and clarified butter.

Many such Brahmanas come to my mother. Give thousand gold coins to every one of them to the satisfaction of the mother."

Lakshmana then like Kuvera, the god of wealth, distributed riches to the Brahmanas. But the servants began to weep seeing them thus getting ready for the forest. Rama along with Lakshmana gave liberally to the poor and the needy.

At that time, in that part of the country there lived a tawny coloured old Brahmana named Trijata born of Garga's line. He had to earn his bread by digging the earth with spades and ploughs. His young wife suffered immensely on account of her husband's poverty. Hearing that Rama was distributing riches to the poor, she went to the Brahmana with her young children and said, "Now lay aside your spade and plough and listen to what I say.

"Prince will repair to the forest today, and for that he is distributing riches to the poor. Go and see Rama and you will surely get something."

Then Trijata, effulgent as Bhrigu and Angira, covering his body with a piece of torn cloth swiftly proceeded to Rama's palace and appearing before Rama said :

"Prince ! I am a poor man and I have got a number of children. I have to earn my living by digging the earth. So please cast a look of mercy on me."

Rama then sportively said, "I have quite a number of cows and I have not as yet distributed even one thousand of them. Just throw your rod as far as you can and you shall get as many cows that can occupy the space covered by your rod."

At this, Trijata quickly tightened the cloth round

his waist and firmly grasping the stick in his hand hurled his rod which fell on a herd of cattle on the other bank of the Saraju.

Then virtuous Rama sent all the cattle extending up to the other side of the Saraju to Trijata's hermitage, and after embracing Trijata said :

"Don't take any offence. I only said this in joke to see to what distance you could throw your rod. Now please tell me if you have anything to ask. Don't feel diffident, I am always willing to serve the Brahmanas with my riches."

Then Trijata being exceedingly delighted by getting a number of cows went away to his place by blessing him profusely.

Heroic Rama then distributed his wealth amongst the Brahmanas, servants, beggars and his friends.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GRIEF

Thus after distributing their wealth, Rama and Lakshmana, in order to see their father, left the place with Sita. Two maid-servants carried before them the arms that were decorated with flowers and sandal-paste by Sita herself.

The streets were overflowing with crowds. It was difficult to pass through them ; therefore, many getting upon the terraces of their houses, and of seven-storied mansions cast painful looks on Rama. And seeing Rama, Lakshmana and Sita walking on foot they burst forth in sorrow, "Alas ! he who was followed by fourfold forces now walks accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana

alone. Rama has tasted the amenities of life but for his righteousness he could not go against the wishes of his father. And every passer-by today beholds Sita who could not so long be seen even by the birds of the sky. Summer's heat, winter's chill, rains will soon mar the beauty of her body now adorned with red sandal-paste. King Dasaratha seems to have been possessed by an evil spirit or he would not have sent Rama to the forest. Not to speak of a son that has won over the love of all people, who forsakes even a worthless son?

"Absence of malice, generosity, learning, goodness, self-restraint, and the control of the senses are the six virtues that adorn Rama.

"The people will surely be greatly afflicted in his absence, as fishes and other aquatic animals become distressed when the waters of a tank are dried up by the burning rays of the sun. On account of his sufferings all will suffer, as the fruits, flowers and leaves of a tree become withered when its roots are severed. Let us, therefore, leave our houses, fields and gardens and follow Rama, and like Lakshmana let us with our wives and friends take the same path treated by Rama. After this, the household deities will no more reside in the land, all religious institutions will be destroyed. Cattle, paddy, and treasures concealed under earth will be dug out and stolen. Dirt and filth will cover the courtyards, and rats will roam about freely; no more smoke will rise from the blazing hearth, and all earthen wares will be broken. We shall leave our country and let Kaikeyi possess it. Then, the forest where Rama repair will turn into a city and the deserted city into a forest. We shall live in happiness with

Rama in the forest. Let now Kaikeyi with her son and friends uninterruptedly rule over the land."

Rama heard the people lamenting thus, but he was not least moved by that, but in cheerful countenance he proceeded onward to meet his father.

Rama then arriving at his father's palace sent information through Sumantra, who found the king dark and overwhelmed with grief, as the sun under the eclipse, or fire covered with ashes, and intimated him about Rama's arrival. The king then asked Sumantra to bring there all his wives living in that part of the palace as he wanted to meet Rama with all his wives. Thereupon, Sumantra summoned all the wives of the king. Then three hundred and fifty wives surrounding Rama's mother Kausalya appeared before the king.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were then ushered in before the king.

Then the king, as he saw Rama from a distance coming towards him with raised palms, instantly rose from his seat and tried to embrace him, but he fainted on the ground. Rama, Lakshmana and others then ran to his help. At this there rose a cry from the women and they began to strike their foreheads and breasts with their palms in sorrow, and thereby a jingling sound of the ornaments was produced.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in tearful eyes placed the king on the sofa. When the king regained his consciousness, Rama said with clasped palms :

"I now intend to proceed to the Dandaka forest. You are lord of us all, please cast a merciful look on me.

"I have tried again and again to dissuade Lakshmana and Sita by cogent reasons, but they are determined to

accompany me, so please permit us to repair to the forest."

At this king Dasaratha replied :

"My boy, I have lost my senses by conferring boons on Kaikeyi. You, therefore, occupy the throne by putting me into chains."¹

Hearing this Rama hastened to reply in joined hands, "May you live for thousand years more and rule the earth. I have no hankering for the throne. I shall come back after fourteen years, by fulfilling your pledge."

At that time Kaikeyi to induce the king to agree to Rama's words secretly beckoned to Dasaratha. At that signal Dasaratha broke forth in tearful eyes :

"Go forth, my boy, fearlessly for the good in this world as well as in the next. May you have peace and happiness. Come back after the expiry of fourteen years.

"You are truthful and righteous. It is not possible to change your mind. But I request you that for the sake of your mother, you please stop this night here. I shall keep you all the time before my eyes and shall dine with you. Then after the night is over, repair to the forest in the morning. You have undertaken to embrace arduous forest-life for my welfare in the next world. But I swear to you that I have not the slightest desire to send you to the forest. But that wily and cruel Kaikeyi who is like smouldering fire hidden in ashes has prevented your installation.

"You are suffering on account of her. My boy !

¹ In the original it is by tying me down which in fact means imprisonment.

you are the best of my sons, and there is no wonder that you will endeavour to carry out my words."

Then Rama said, "Father, I shall reap greater blessings today than kingdom. Please confer it on Bharata and prove yourself truthful. Please do not doubt me. I do not hanker for the throne either for my own happiness or for that of any dear ones of mine. Do not shed any more tears, nor be much anxious for me. I shall live happily in the forest where deer roam in herds and sweet birds sing. I shall come back again after fourteen years. All are crying for me, it is your duty to console them but if you yourself be overwhelmed with grief who will pacify them? Do not be sorry for me. I do not wish to possess kingdom or even dear Janaki by proving yourself untruthful to the world. May you live in peace, now permit us to repair to the forest."

Dasaratha deeply embraced Rama and again fainted from extreme sorrow. Thereupon all the queens excepting Kaikeyi began to weep. Sumantra too fainted in grief but he regained his consciousness soon, and being beside himself in towering rage he grinded his teeth. His face grew dark and with red hot eyes and shaking his head addressing Kaikeyi said, "The ruler of the earth, king Dasaratha, is your husband. When you could forsake such a husband, you are up to anything. You shouldn't have insulted your husband. It is the duty of the woman to act according to the wishes of her husband. You are bent upon to alter the time-honoured law of succession to the throne. How pious men will live in this kingdom? Strange! That the earth was not rent asunder at your conduct. Who can foretell the conse-

quences of your act? Who clings to a bitter Nimba tree by cutting down a mango tree? Nimba never grows sweet, however much you may pour water at the root of the tree. And it is not untrue that sweet juice is not extracted from the Nimba, however much one may try. You are like your mother, and I have heard that your mother was addicted to vice. Hear me why I say so.

"Formerly, a sage conferred on your father, king Kaikeya, a boon by which he was able to understand the language of beasts and birds. One day Kaikeya was lying on his bed when a gold-coloured Jrimbha bird made certain sounds at which your father laughed heartily, knowing the intention of the bird. Seeing your father thus laughing without any cause your mother grew angry and said, 'Tell me why are you laughing? If you do not disclose the cause of your laughter, I shall commit suicide.' King Kaikeya replied, 'If I disclose to you the cause of my laughter, I shall instantly meet with death.' Then your mother said, 'I don't care whether you live or die; you must tell me the reason of your laughter and henceforth you must not laugh at me.'

"Then the king went again to the saint who had conferred on him the boon and told him everything. The saint said, 'You must not disclose the secret to your wife, even if she dies.' At this your father abandoned her instantly. It is said that a boy inherits the qualities of the father and a girl those of the mother. I entreat you not to behave like your mother. I entreat you to act according to the wishes of the king, and save us all. If Rama goes to the forest you will incur great public odium."

But Kaikeyi remained quite unmoved.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARTING SCENE

King Dasaratha greatly repented for his promise and he said in tears heaving a deep sigh, "O Sumantra, please despatch fourfold forces to the forest for serving Rama, and with them send damsels of clever speech, and rich merchants with their merchandise, and also those wrestlers who live under Rama and wrestle with him. Give them best arms, cars and fowlers well-acquainted with everything of the forest. Let all the citizens go to the forest. They will forget the city by hunting, drinking wild honey, and by seeing rivers and streams. Let the servants carry into the forest all that is contained in the treasury and in the granaries. The prince will live happily by performing sacrifices and paying the Brahmanas sufficiently. So send all articles of enjoyment with Rama. After this Bharata will reign in Ayodhya."

At this Kaikeyi's face grew dark and she said, "If all things of enjoyment be despatched to the forest, then what Bharata will gain by receiving an empty kingdom—like a cup of liquor drunk to the lees?"

Thereupon, Dasaratha angrily replied, "Why did you not mention these things at the time of asking you for Rama's exile to the forest?"

Kaikeyi then flaming in wrath asked the king to send Rama to the forest, as the king Sagara turned out Asamanja from the city.

At this, an old friend of the king named Sidhyartha said that Asamanja was a cruel tyrant, he used to amuse himself by throwing children in the waters of the

Saraju. The people grew angry at this, and they saw the king in a body and asked whether he wanted them or Asamanja. Thereupon, the king sent Asamanja with his wife into exile to the forest. Virtuous Sagara deserted Asamanja because he was unruly, whereas Rama is absolutely guiltless like the moon.

Hearing this Dasaratha said, "You see, O vicious woman, the words of Sidhyartha do not appear very pleasant to you. I shall, however, go with Rama. You remain here and rule with Bharata."

Then Rama entreatingly said, "Father, what shall I do with troops, since I am going to the forest by renouncing all luxury? After giving away the elephant in charity, it is useless to grieve for its tether. I shall give every thing to Bharata. Somebody fetch me bark, hoe and a basket for going to the forest."

At this Kaikeyi herself brought a bark-garment, and she shamelessly said :

"Rama, I have brought you the bark, now put it on."

Then Rama put off his fine clothes and put on bark, the ascetic's garb. Lakshmana too in the presence of the father put on the ascetic's dress. But Sita clad in silk became much alarmed at the sight of the bark-garment meant for her, as a doe gets frightened at the sight of a noose, and in tears she sorrowfully asked her husband, "O Lord, how the ascetics living in the forest put on their dress?" Thus being embarrassed, Sita, stood in shame by throwing one end of the bark on her neck and holding the other end in her hand. Seeing this Rama hied to her and tied the ascetic-garb round her. Finding Rama thus fastening on Sita the ascetic's

dress, all the women burst into tears and they said, "Janaki has not been ordered into exile, as you have been by the king. So long you do not come back, we shall soothe ourselves by seeing Sita. So you go with Lakshmana. Sita can't go with you like a nun. We know you are virtuous and you won't agree to stop here, but we request you to leave Janaki here."

But Rama did not desist. At this, Vasishtha, the priest of the clan, addressing Kaikeyi broke forth in tears, "Ah, you vile woman, your desires overstep your sense of honour. You have duped the king but you are now going to the extreme. Sita, however, cannot go to the forest. She will occupy the throne in Rama's place, for wife is the better-half of a man. So Sita will rule over the earth being the half of Rama's self. If she accompanies Rama to the forest, then we shall all repair to the forest—even the warders of the palace will leave for the forest. Bharata and Satrughna will follow Rama putting on bark-garments. Then this deserted city will turn into a dreary forest where even the necessities of life will not be available. That will not be reckoned as a kingdom where Rama is not the king, and the forest where he will live will turn into a prosperous kingdom. Bharata will not accept the kingdom, since the king confers it under compulsion, and if he is begotten of Dasaratha, he will not fail to act as his son towards you. He will not swerve an inch, in dealing with you, as is proper, for your ungenerous conduct. So you have really injured your son by praying for his throne. There is none in this world who is not partial to Rama. You will witness it today. Beasts and birds will follow Rama, even the trees that are rooted to the ground have turn-

ed towards the direction of Rama. So take off that bark from Sita and deck her with excellent ornaments. The garb of an ascetic is not her proper dress. You have asked only for Rama's exile, what harm is there if she lies with him in good apparels. Let her take with her good clothes, cars and servants."

But Janaki did not desist at these words. She was bent upon to put on the ascetic's dress. When the daughter of Janaka having her husband living, put on the ascetic's weeds, like a destitute one, all cried shame on Dasaratha. Dasaratha was greatly mortified at this and heaved a deep sigh of sorrow; then addressing Kaikeyi said, "Kaikeyi, Janaki is a tender girl brought up in the lap of happiness, let her not put on the bark-garment. This exile of Janaki has been brought by you through your ignorance. But your desires will ruin you as the flowers of a bamboo destroys the bamboo itself. Are you not satisfied by sending Rama to the forest? You will be doomed to hell for your conduct."

Rama then with a bent look addressing Dasaratha said:

"Father, my magnanimous mother Kausalya has not spoken anything ill about you, after hearing the news of my exile. She has not as yet suffered any sorrow. She will be greatly pained at my separation. I commend her to your charge. She does not like my absence even for a moment, please see that she may not die for me."

Dasaratha and his queens seeing Rama dressed like a hermit lost their senses in sorrow. Dasaratha could not even look at Rama and became dumb with sorrow, and after some time when he had regained his power of speech, he began to lament bitterly.

Dasaratha then asked Sumantra to escort Rama in chariot to the outskirts of the city, and asked the treasurer to fetch excellent clothes and ornaments for Janaki sufficient for the period of her exile. The treasurer shortly returned with ornaments and dress. Then high-born Sita put on those ornaments, and thus being adorned the whole room became radiant with her beauty as the sky is crimsoned by the glittering morning sun. Kausalya then after embracing her and kissing her head said :

"My daughter, the woman (though she may be the object of every one's affection) who fails to serve her husband in adversity is reckoned as unchaste. The nature of such a false woman is that she enjoys happiness at the time of her husband's prosperity, but in adversity she accuses the husband of many things, nay more, even deserts him. She is untruthful, and gets irritated even at trivial things, because her mind is not attached to her husband. Fickle-minded women do not care for rank or lineage ; they are won over by ornaments or dress ; they are ungrateful, and have little regard for righteousness, and they never acknowledge their faults even when pointed out. But those who are obedient to their superiors, truthful and pure, regard their husbands as the supreme agents for moral and spiritual well-being. Now, though Rama has been sent into exile, do not neglect him. Whether he be rich or poor, you must always revere him as a God."

Janaki then replied in clasped palms, "I shall surely obey your words. I know how one ought to behave with her husband. I am inseparable from righteousness as the brightness from the moon. A woman can never be

happy even with hundred sons without the husband. Her life is then like a lyre without the strings, or a chariot without its wheels. The gifts of the father, mother and the son are limited. It is only the husband's gifts that are unlimited ; nobody can give so much. Who will not serve her husband ? Why should I slight my husband ? Husband is the highest God to a woman."

Kausalya was mightily pleased at Janaki's words.

Then Rama assured his mother saying that he would come back with Lakshmana and Sita after fourteen years. Then addressing the women there Rama said in clasped hands, "Mothers, if on account of living together I have ever even unwittingly ill-treated any one of you, please forgive me today."

At this all the women burst into bitter cries, and the palace which was once resounded with musical notes became reverberant with their lamentations.

Then Rama with Lakshmana and Sita in clasped palms bowed at Dasaratha's feet, and after going round him he bowed to his mother.

Lakshmana first bowed to Kausalya and then to his mother Sumitra. Sumitra after kissing his head said :

"My boy, though you are attached to all, yet I ask you to repair to the forest. Your brother is going to the forest. You must, therefore, be vigilant in all things. You must regard Rama, whether in prosperity or in adversity, as your true lord. It is just that the younger should obey the elder. Now go to the forest, look upon Rama as you should look upon your father, on Janaki as your mother, and on the deep forest as Ayodhya."

Then Sumantra humbly asked Rama to get upon the car.

Then, first of all, Sita cheerfully ascended the golden car glittering as the sun.

Then Rama and Lakshmana got upon the chariot after placing upon the car various arms, coats of mail, baskets and ornaments and clothes given to Sita by their father.

And the car began to move swiftly with a deep rumbling noise as soon as Sumantra whipped the horses swift as the wind.

Loud cries rose from every quarter and extreme tumult seized the city. Men and women, the young and the old, all began to run after Rama, as thirsty travellers, oppressed by the sun, run after water.

They entreated Sumantra in tearful eyes to drive slowly, saying, "Let us once more see the lotus-face of the prince as we shall soon be deprived of it for a long time. Perhaps, his mother Kausalya's heart is made of iron, or it would have rent to pieces by sending such a son to the forest. Blessed is virtuous Janaki for following him like a shadow. As the sun's rays never leave the peak of Sumeru, so she is never separated from Rama."

In the meantime, Dasaratha with his wives came out of the room to have a last look on Rama. At that time being cast down with sorrow Dasaratha looked like the moon under the eclipse.

All the time Rama urged Sumantra to drive quickly, whereas the citizens clamoured to stop the car. Their tears drenched the street, they were almost senseless with grief, and tears fell from the eyes of the women ; as collected rain-drops fall from the agitated

lotuses being shaken by the movement of fishes. King Dasaratha fainted at the sight, and a great tumult rose from the people.

When Rama cast his eyes behind, he found his father and mother following the car on foot, being stricken with grief. As a tied up colt cannot see its mother, so Rama bound by truth could not look to his mother. But the sight of their sufferings became unbearable to him. He urged again and again Sumantra to drive more swiftly. But Kausalya ran after the car, as the cow after its calf and she began to cry aloud taking the names of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in turn. Dasaratha asked to stop the car, whereas Rama urged to move on, and Sumantra sat confused. At this Rama said :

"Sumantra, if the king takes you to task after your return, tell him that you could not hear him on account of the tumult. But delay will cause me greater pain."

Then Sumantra drove the car at greater speed. Then the citizens and members of the royal family stopped by respectfully going round Rama in their thoughts, and following him in mind in the direction towards which Rama went.

Then the counsellors persuaded Dasaratha to desist. Dasaratha with a sorrowful mien and perspiring body stood eagerly looking at Rama.

When Rama was gone, woeful cries rose from the palace. Dasaratha was greatly distressed by hearing these cries. Darkness and despair seemed to seize the land. Everybody was smitten with sorrow and began to think of Rama.

So long the dust raised by the chariot could be seen,

Dasaratha stood motionless gazing at it. But as soon as it was out of sight, he fainted on the ground.

Then Kausalya raised him from the ground and walked along with him by holding up his right hand, while Kaikeyi walked on his left.

Seeing Kaikeyi, Dasaratha burst forth, "Ah, vile woman, don't touch my body, I don't like to see your face. You are no wife to me. If Bharata be delighted by getting the kingdom, then his gifts on my funeral obsequies will not reach me in the next world."

Thoughts of Rama began to consume the king, and he again and again turned back to behold the track of the car. Thinking that perhaps by that time Rama had reached the outskirts of the city, in tearful eyes he marked the hoof-prints of the horses hurrying Rama away to the forest. And at last, with a broken heart he entered the palace as the sun enters a bank of clouds, and in absence of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, the whole palace looked empty like a hollow deep.

CHAPTER XIX

PEOPLE'S REGRET

The citizens of Ayodhya all loved Rama dearly, and they did not cease to follow Rama even when Dasaratha desisted. They ran after his car.

Rama then eyeing them with affection said, "Show the love and regard you have for me, in greater measure, at my request, to Bharata. That son of Kaikeyi is good-natured, and he will surely contribute to your good and happiness. Though young in years he is old in wisdom, he has great might yet he is tender-hearted, he will be able to remove all your fears. The qualities

that should adorn a king are possessed in a greater degree by Bharata than by myself. He will be a worthy ruler of you. It is your duty now to obey him in every respect."

But the people in tearful eyes entreated Rama to be the king. Meanwhile, old Brahmins stricken with age, pursued his car and asked Rama to desist. Rama then with Lakshmana and Sita got down from the car and respectfully persuaded them to stop. The Brahmins said, "We shall follow you in a body, since you honour us most. We shall protect your head in the Sun with our umbrellas white as autumnal clouds, obtained from the sacrifice of Vajapeya. We shall carry our learning and Vedic lore to the forest and our wives will attend to your domestic duties. We entreat you by knocking our grey heads on dust not to repair to the forest. All creatures love you and are dissuading you from proceeding to the forest. Look, the tall trees rooted to the earth, thus being unable to follow you, are dissuading you by deep murmuring sound produced by the wind. Look, even the birds have ceased from their quest for food."

When the Brahmins were thus speaking, Rama saw the banks of the Tamasa from a distance.

On reaching the banks of the Tamasa, Sumantra unyoked the horses; and as soon as the horses were unharnessed, they began to roll in the dust.

Rama then sat on the beautiful bank of the Tamasa, and looking at Janaki he said to Lakshmana, "My boy, this is the first night of our exile in the forest. But don't feel aggrieved. The people of Ayodhya are sorry for us, for they love us deeply. I am extremely sorry

for my father and mother. Surely they have become blind with tears. Virtuous Bharata will no doubt console them, and I feel greatly relieved by thinking of the amiable qualities of Bharata. Lakshmana, you have done good by accompanying me, or for the protection of Janaki I would have to take another's help. Let us pass the night on this bank. There is plenty of wild fruits here, but I have resolved to take nothing else but water this night."

Rama then asked Sumantra to look after the horses and Sumantra gave them sufficient quantity of grass.

Seeing the night about to set in, Rama with the help of Lakshmana prepared a bed, and lay on it with Sita. Then finding Rama asleep, Lakshmana repaired to Sumantra and talked about Rama.

CHAPTER XX

NIGHT IN THE PALACE

King Dasaratha came back to his palace stricken with grief and remorse, "How Rama, accustomed to rest his head pleasantly on a pillow, and fanned by beautiful women, will sleep under a tree and lay his head on a piece of wood or stone? How will he bear the hardships of a forest-life?" Such thoughts pained the king greatly and he asked the sentries in a faltering voice to take him to Kausalya's quarters. When the warders did so, Dasaratha entered the room hanging down his head in sad dejection. He was oppressed by the gloomy look of the room, as the sky appears cheerless without the moon, and he cried, "Ah, Rama! how could you leave your parents. Ah, they are happy who will survive to witness your return."

At midnight Dasaratha said to Kausalya, "I do not see you, please touch my body with your palm. My power of vision has gone with Rama."

Then Kausalya aggrieved for her son, said, "My Lord, crooked Kaikeyi having vented her venom will now freely roam about like a snake that has cast off her slough. If Rama had stopped at home and lived on alms, or if I had made him Kaikeyi's slave, even that would have been better. But sent by you to the forest at Kaikeyi's words, what privations he will be subject to! Will such a time ever come when my sorrow will be over by seeing Rama returning with Lakshmana and Sita? Certainly, I had formerly committed great sin by cutting off the udders of cows thus preventing the calves from drinking their mother's milk, and it is for this that I have been deprived of my son. I cannot live without my son."

Then virtuous Sumantra consoled her, saying, "O worshipful lady, your son is a prince among men, why do you weep so bitterly? Your son has gone to the forest to fulfil the pledge of his father, and he will reap immense benefit in the next world. Lakshmana will minister unto Rama, and I tell you that considering Rama's heroism and good qualities, there is no doubt that he will return from the forest and regain his kingdom. And Rama will be installed on the throne with the Earth, Vaidehi and the Goddess of victory. Banish your sorrows, evil cannot touch Rama. You will again see your son, like the new-risen moon bowing at your feet, and you will shed tears of joy like drops of rain from the clouds."

At this Kausalya's grief was somewhat assuaged.

CHAPTER XXI

FRIENDSHIP WITH GUHAKA

Rama passed the night on the bank of the Tamasa and he rose from sleep at dawn. He then addressing Lakshmana said, "My boy, the people have left their homes for our sake. They are resolved to take me back. Let us, while they are asleep, get into our car and leave this place quickly."

Lakshmana agreed. Rama then asked the charioteer to yoke the horses. Sumantra soon got the chariot ready. Rama got upon it with Sita and Lakshmana and in a short time left behind the Tamasa full of eddies and set out towards the north.

When the day dawned, the citizens began to cast tearful glances all round, but even the dust raised by the wheels of the chariot could not be seen.

"Ah, cursed is sleep," they broke forth in one voice, "it is for sleep that we have missed that broad-chested and mighty-armed hero. How could he leave us since he looked after us, as an affectionate father looks after his sons? Here we shall die or proceed towards the north to meet death. Sufficient dry woods are available on the banks of the Tamasa, we shall prepare a funeral pyre and then cast ourselves into it. What is the good of living without Rama!"

Then the citizens for some distance followed the track of the car, and when it could no more be traced, they returned to the city with tearful eyes. When they came back, all were overwhelmed with grief. People gave up rejoicing. Merchants did not open their stalls or spread their stores. In every family all the

members were smitten with sorrow and householders even neglected their everyday duties.

All the women cursed Kaikeyi and said, "Blessed are Sita and Lakshmana, for they have followed Rama. Blessed are the rivers and ponds in which Rama will bathe. The mountains will greet him as a welcome guest. Trees will contribute to his comfort by providing him with beds of leaves. The mountains will present him with choicest fruits and flowers and crystal water for drink. Rama will witness trees with wonderful blossoms and buds with swarms of bees hovering on them. Where Rama is, there is no defeat or fear."

The day thus passed in sorrow, the sun set, as if being unable to see the sorrows of the people. And the whole of Ayodhya looked like a starless night.

Meanwhile, Rama in order to fulfil his father's promise had cleared a long distance. The day dawned on his way. After saying his morning prayers, Rama entered into a different province, and proceeded along, witnessing ploughed fields, flower-gardens and villages on both sides of the road. The car was moving very fast ; but Rama was insensible to its motion being absorbed in delight at the sight of natural beauties. When the villagers saw Rama they cursed both Dasaratha and Kaikeyi. Thus Rama reached the last limits of Koshala. Then after crossing the sacred stream Vedsaruti, Rama proceeded towards the south. After some distance he crossed the Gomati flowing into the ocean. He then crossed over the Syandika resounding with the cackling notes of the swans and the ducks. Here Rama pointed out to Sita the regions which Manu made over to king Ikshwaku.

Then addressing Sumantra, Rama said, "When shall I again be back and hunt among the flowery woods on the banks of Saraju with my parents? Of course, I have no great love for hunting but since it has been sanctioned by the host of saintly kings, I cannot condemn it as something forbidden."

Rama then turned towards Ayodhya and said with clasped palms, "Ah, my beloved city, governed by the Raghus, I bow to thee and to all the deities that protect thee and live in thee. I shall greet you again as also my parents, returning from the forest after being absolved from the debt of vow."

Rama then raising his hands, addressing the people said, "You have shown sufficient regard and love for me. You must not suffer any more. Now go back and allow me to proceed to my destination."

Thereupon, the people returned after saluting Rama. They again and again stopped on their way to have a look of Rama. But their eyes were not gratified on seeing Rama again and again.

At last Rama vanished out of their sight like the evening sun, and left behind the kingdom of Koshala inhabited by generous people, where the Vedas are continually chanted, which abounds in tanks and mangroves and is rich in wealth, cattle and grains, and is crowded with hamlets, each worthy of a monarch's care.

Rama then reached prosperous Sringeripura beautified with gardens. There he found the sacred Ganges flowing with a deep murmuring sound. There the crystal water of the Ganges as cool and transparent like gems, and beautiful hermitages stood on its banks. At some places the river was dashing furiously against

rocks and stones. Somewhere it was laughing in foams, at some places it was flowing like a braid of hair, and somewhere it was full of eddies. At some places, ducks and cranes were making noise on sandy tracts, while at some other places the trees stood in a row like a garland and lilies and lotuses were floating on the stream. Rama at the sight of the Bhagirathi said, "Look Sumantra, at a short distance from the river there stands an Ingudi tree adorned with blossoms and leaves. We shall put up there."

Lakshmana and Sumantra agreed, and the car quickly drove near the tree. Rama, Janaki and Lakshmana got down from the car. Sumantra then unyoked the horses and came near Rama for serving him.

There lived at that place a powerful king of the Nishadas called Guhaka. Hearing that Rama had arrived in the Nishada¹ kingdom, Guhaka with his aged ministers and friends came to Rama and after expressing his deep sorrow and embracing him said, "Friends, you should consider my kingdom as your Ayodhya. Now tell me what shall I do for you. It is only through good fortune that one gets such a welcome guest."

Saying this, the Nishada king brought Arghya and delicious fruits and asked, "Friends, had you a pleasant journey? This Nishada kingdom is yours and we are your servants. Now please accept this food and drink, beds, and also fodder for your horses."

1 Most probably a Non-Aryan people whose chief occupation was hunting, and untouchable to the high-caste Hindus.

Rama hearing these words said, "Oh Nishada king, I have been well-received and extremely glad that you have come from a distance to show your affection for me."

Saying this, Rama deeply embraced Guhaka and said, "It is due to my good luck that I find you hale and hearty with your friends and relations. Is everything safe with your kingdom and forest? The things you have presented me out of love I cannot accept. For I shall have to live like an ascetic by wearing bark and living on roots and fruits. So I cannot accept anything but fodder from you for the horses. These horses are dear to king Dasaratha, and I shall think myself entertained if they are cared for and fed."

Rama then said his evening prayers and after it was over, Lakshmana brought drinking water for Rama. After drinking water Rama lay down with Janaki on the ground. Lakshmana then after washing their feet took shelter under a tree.

Finding Lakshmana keeping up the night for protection of Rama, Guhaka sorrowfully said, "Prince, soft bed has been prepared for you ; just take your rest, we can bear all hardships at ease. I will with bow in hand and with my men guard my friend reposing with Sita. I always roam in the forest and there is nothing unknown to me." At this Lakshmana replied, "Oh Nishada king, I know, you are virtuous, and when you have taken the responsibility of protection, there is nothing to fear from. But look, the chief of the Raghu's line is lying on the ground with Janaki. Then what necessity is there for my sleep! He is our eldest, and father got him after long prayers as a divine favour.

Surely, the king won't survive long after sending Rama to the forest, and soon the earth will be widowed by his death. O Nishada chief ! I don't think Kausalya, Sumitra and Dasaratha are still alive. If it is so, they won't survive this night. My mother may live by looking up to Satrughna ; but Kausalya will die for her son. I know not what will happen to father in absence of his eldest son. He will die, and Kausalya after her. They are fortunate who will be able to perform the funeral rites of my father, and live in Ayodhya—my father's capital beautified with fine terraces, gardens, wide roads, magnificent palaces, and inhabited by happy and healthy citizens and where there is plenty of horses, elephants, cars and courtesans. Alas ! heaven alone knows whether father is alive or not "

At break of dawn Rama said, "Lakshmana, the night is over, the cuckoos are singing in the wood and the cries of peacocks are being heard. Let us now cross the Ganges." Then addressing Sumantra Rama said, "Go back to the king soon, my journey by the car must now end.

"Henceforth, I shall walk on foot and enter the deep forest. Just see that father may not be too much distressed for me, and after conveying my deep respects, please tell him on my behalf that I am not sorry for my exile from the city, or for habitation in the forest. After the expiry of fourteen years he will find us with Janaki again.

"After saying this to my father and mother, convey the same to my other mother and Kaikeyi, Give Kausalya our respect and tell her that everything is alright with us. Also tell the king to fetch Bharata soon and

install him on the throne. Please also tell dear Bharata that he should behave with our mothers as he will behave towards the king and to look upon Sumitra and Kausalya as he will look upon Kaikeyi." Sumantra then said with tears, "I now find that virtue, gentleness, candour are not rewarded in this earth."

Rama then persuaded Sumantra to leave him and go back to the city.

Sumantra then burst forth in tears, "How shall I go back with the empty car? Permit me to follow you. After the expiry of the period of exile, I shall return with you to Ayodhya in this car. Living with you I shall not feel the length of time."

Rama then said, "I know you love me, but you must go back. On your return mother Kaikeyi will be confirmed about my banishment. But so long you do not go back, she will doubt it and suspect the righteous king. My prime motive is that Kaikeyi may enjoy the kingdom of Bharata. You therefore go back for me and for my father."

Rama then asked Guhaka to fetch him a boat for crossing the Ganges. At this the king of the Nishadas said to his men, "Bring without delay a good and a strong boat furnished with a rudder and steered by a helmsman."

When the boat was brought, Guhaka asked, "Get up on the boat and tell me what more shall I do for you."

Rama said, "Guhaka, I have gained my object through your help. Now put my things on the boat" Saying this Rama put on his coat of mail, took his bow and sword, began to descend the bank with Lakshmana and Sita. At that time Sumantra approached Rama and

said with joined hands, "Prince, tell me what am I to do now?"

Rama then touching Sumantra by the right hand said, "You now speedily return to the king. You are a friend of the Ikshwaku line. Father has been greatly mortified by my absence. Just console him and tell him that he will find us again in the capital after fourteen years. Tell him that we are not least sorry for leaving the city for the forest. Please see that king may not be unhappy in any way."

Sumantra then shed bitter tears and stood mute with a sorrowful heart.

Ramchandra then turning to Guhaka said, "Guhaka, it does not seem proper to me to live in a forest inhabited by men. I should now live in a hermitage and should be properly dressed for that. I shall repair to the forest like an ascetic with Sita and Lakshmana. Please bring me the gum of a Banian tree for producing the matted hair of an ascetic."

Then the Banian gum was brought. The two brothers then matted their locks and put on bark-garments, whereupon they looked like two Rishis.

At the time of departure, Rama addressing Guhaka said, "My friend! there are good many difficulties in administering a kingdom, so you should always be vigilant about your army, exchequer, forts and provinces." Reaching the edge of the Ganges, Rama asked Lakshmana first to help Janaki to get upon the boat and then to get into it himself. This being done, Rama boarded the boat. Then the boat began to move swiftly being pulled by the oars.

Lakshmana and Janaki bowed to the Ganges, and

when the boat reached the mid-stream, Janaki with clasped palms said, "O Ganga, may the prince through your grace safely fulfil the vow. May he return with us after passing fourteen years in the forest. After returning safely I shall worship you to my heart's content. You are the consort of the Ocean, and you cover the regions of Brahma. O Goddess! I bow to thee. If Rama returns safely and gets back his kingdom, I shall distribute for you through Brahmanas thousands of kine, horses, jars of wine and pillao.¹ I shall worship the gods that dwell in your bank and the holy shrines and the sacred places of pilgrimage that stand on your banks."

The boat soon reached the right bank of the Ganges. Then landing from the boat Rama said to Lakshmana, "Be careful for the protection of Sita, be it, in solitude or in society of men. You walk ahead and let Sita follow you. I shall go after you protecting you both. It is necessary to protect each other. Today Janaki has entered that forest where there is no human habitation and where the ground is uneven and full of pits and holes. Janaki will experience the hardships of a forest-life even from this day."

Rama then reached the rich province of Batsa, rich in grains. Rama then killed boars and deer and taking their sacred meat entered the forest in the evening.

After saying his evening prayers, Rama spoke to Lakshmana, "This is the first night that we are going

1 An Indian delicacy—rice cooked with clarified butter and various rich spices, along with meat or fish wrongly supposed to have been introduced in the Mahomedan rule.

to spend outside the city. You should not feel uneasy for that. Henceforth, we shall have to be vigilant at night. It rests with us to protect what Sita possesses, and also to secure her what she doesn't possess. Come, let us ourselves collect grass and leaves and prepare a bed on the ground and somehow lie down on it."

Lying down on a bed of leaves under a Banian tree, Rama said, "Brother, surely the king is passing a miserable night. Kaikeyi's desire has been fulfilled. From this incident it seems to me that lust is the most powerful passion in man—even stronger than greed for gold. He that follows lust forgetting all other interests brings miseries on him like king Dasaratha. Kaikeyi may now slight Kausalya and Sumitra. Your mother will be greatly afflicted for us. So go back to Ayodhya tomorrow morning. I shall alone go with Sita to the Dandaka forest. Mother Kausalya will suffer much on my account. Hence no woman brings forth an unworthy son like me. What service have I rendered to my mother?"

Then finding Rama to be silent Lakshmana observed, "Arya, surely Ayodhya looks gloomy like a moonless night. I cannot live without you. I do not care for my parents or heaven, being separated from you." The forests were devoid of human beings, and there was none about. So the three lay down fearlessly as lions on lonely mountain-peaks.

CHAPTER XXII

HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJA

As the sun rose in the east they rose from sleep, and proceeded towards the confluence of the Ganges and the

Jamuna, and in their way they beheld various landscapes and flowery trees.

When the day declined, Rama said to Lakshmana, "Look, smoke is rising from the direction of Prayaga. Perhaps some ascetic lives near. We have certainly arrived near the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna. The deep rumbling noise is distinctly heard."

In the evening Rama reached the hermitage of saint Bharadwaja, putting the beasts and birds of the asylum into fright. They found the great anchorite seated with his disciples. Rama after saluting the sage with Lakshmana and Sita, said, "Sir, we are the sons of king Dasaraatha. I am Rama and he is Lakshmana. The auspicious daughter of Janaka—the saintly king—is my wife. In obedience to the mandate of our father we are now repairing to the forest." Hearing this the ascetic welcomed Rama with Arghya and offered him a bull¹ and various kinds of fruits and roots and drinking water, and assigned to him a place of rest.

Then Bharadwaja and other hermits sat round Rama and Bharadwaja said :

"Rama, we have heard that you have been banished for nothing. However, live in this beautiful secluded place."

1 It alludes to the custom when the Hindus were in the habit of taking beef. When a notable guest came, the host often offered him a calf or a bull for his entertainment.

The sanskrit word Goghna means a traveller or a guest who was entertained by the slaughter of a cow or a bull. Allusion to it is to be found even in so late a production as Bhavabhuti's Uttarcharita.

Rama replied, "There are cities and human habitations near about it. People will then easily see me and Janaki, and they will then often come to us. For this reason the place does not appear to be much commendable to me. Name me some lonely place where Janaki may live happily."

Bharadwaja said, "There is a mountain called the Chitrakuta, twenty miles away from this place. Plenty of Golangulas, bears and monkeys live there. The hill is sacred. Many old saints have attained heaven by devoting themselves at that place to meditations for hundreds of years. It seems to me the Chitrakuta will be pleasant to you, or if you like you may live with me in my hermitage."

Rama passed the night with Sita and Lakshmana in the hermitage.

In the morning, Rama asked Bharadwaja's permission to proceed to the Chitrakuta.

Bharadwaja said, "The Chitrakuta is the best place for you. You will get plenty of fruits, roots and honey there. It abounds in trees. There you will always hear the notes of cuckoos and the cries of peacocks. You will be delighted by seeing with Sita the mountain scenery."

Then Rama made arrangements for going to the Chitrakuta. After performing auspicious rites for the welfare of Rama, sage Bharadwaja said :

"After reaching the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna proceed along with the Jamuna flowing to the west. After going some distance you will find a place of pilgrimage, from that place cross the river in a raft. There stands a very high Banian tree called

Shyam, with yellowish green leaves. It is surrounded by various trees and many hermits live under it. You bow down to that tree with clasped palms, and rest under its shade. You will then come across a blue forest on the banks of the Jamuna. I had been to the Chitrakuta many a time. This is the route to go there. It is a beautiful sandy place and there never occurs any forest-fire."

Rama then proceeded according to the directions of Bharadwaja. Rama crossed the swift stream of the Jamuna by preparing a raft with dry woods, covering it with grass. Mighty Lakshmana made a seat for Sita with cane and branches of the rose-apple. Then Rama made his dear, bashful wife, glorious like the Goddess of Fortune, to get upon the boat, and placed beside her, clothes, ornaments, hoe and the basket covered with a goat-skin. Then Rama and Lakshmana got upon the boat.

When the boat arrived at mid-stream, Sita prayed to the sacred stream. By that raft they crossed the rapidly-flowing daughter of the sun, heaving with waves. Then they entered a forest on the bank of the Jamuna.

Vaidehi bowed to the great Banian tree known as Shyam. And as Sita saw various kinds of trees, shrubs and hitherto unforeseen creepers with fruits and flowers, she questioned Rama out of curiosity, at which Lakshmana brought her promptly diverse kinds of fruits and flowers. At that time Sita was mightily pleased at the sight of the crystal-watered Jamuna resounding with the notes of cranes and ducks.

After walking about two miles Rama and Laksh-

mana killed a number of deer, took their meat and passed the night on the even bank of the river.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHITRAKUTA

When the night was over, Rama gently roused Lakshmana from sleep and said :

"Lakshmana, just hear how sweet the birds are chirping ; it is time for our departure."

After bathing in the Jamuna they waded their way to the Chitrakuta. On the way Rama, pointing the woods to Sita, said :

"Look Sita, how on account of flowers blossoming in the spring, the Kinsuka tree seems to be garlanded and appears to be encircled by a flame (for its red flowers). Behold the Bhallatak and the Bel are bent down with fruits and flowers and big honey-combs hang almost on every tree. Datyاهر and peacocks are crying in shrill notes, and the ground is covered with flowers fallen from the trees. There is the Chitrakuta (at a little distance) loud with the notes of wild birds and where elephants roam about in herds. Lakshmana, we shall live happily in the valley of the Chitrakuta."

After walking a short distance they reached the Chitrakuta mountain, and Rama said, "Lakshmana, here we shall get plenty of food, and its water is delightful to the taste. Probably we won't have to toil here to support ourselves. A good many hermits live here. It is a fit place for our abode. Let us then settle here."

Then they arrived at the hermitage of Valmiki and introduced themselves to the great saint. Valmiki¹ too welcomed them hospitably. Then Rama asked Lakshmana to build a cottage with strong woods. Lakshmana thereupon erected a beautiful hut with wooden walls on four sides and a thatched roof. Rama then said, "Let us now procure venison to perform a sacrifice for sanctifying the house. Those who want to live for a long time, they ought to perform the rite. Therefore quickly kill some deer and bring their meat. It is proper to abide by the rules of the Shastras."

Lakshmana brought the venison, and Rama said, "You go and cook the meat and I shall perform the ceremony."

Lakshmana then threw the meat into fire, and when it was well-roasted and free from blood, he informed Rama that he had cooked a black deer. Rama then performed the ceremony and after worshipping the Gods he entered the cottage. And after that he offered sacrifices to Rudra, Vishnu and Viswedevas. After this Rama took his bath in the stream and erected *chaitya* and sacred altar as befitting the cottage. Rama then with Janaki and Lakshmana entered the cottage. And Janaki lived happily there. She was immensely glad in seeing the Malyavati stream furnished with good bathing places and visited by wild fowls and deer. She forgot the sorrow of her exile from Ayodhya to the forest.

1 These lines conclusively prove that the original poem of Valmiki has undergone great changes at different hands and in different ages, and the whole epic has been overrun with interpolations.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUMANTRA'S RETURN

When Rama crossed the Ganges, Guhaka sorrowfully returned to his place, and learnt from envoys of Rama's visit to Bharadwaja at Prayaga, and his journey to the Chitrakuta.

Sumantra, then at the words of Guhaka, yoked the horses to his chariot and proceeded towards Ayodhya with a broken heart.

On the third day, at dusk, Sumantra reached Ayodhya and found it sad and silent like a deserted city. Seeing Sumantra coming back, the citizens ran after the car, crying, "Where is Rama?"

Sumantra then said, "I have come back at the command of Rama from the bank of the Ganges. I know nothing more about him."

Then the citizens burst into tears, thinking that Rama had already crossed the Ganges. Sumantra heard the women bitterly lamenting for Rama, standing by the side of the windows. Sumantra then entered the palace covering his face with a piece of cloth. As he passed through seven apartments crowded with prominent people, women on the roof of the palace began to cry for Rama and they cast dim look from their large, glassy, tearful eyes. Royal dames descended from the palace and broke forth with their voices softened in grief:

"Ah! Sumantra went forth with Rama but why has he come alone? We know not how he will console Kausalya. Seeing Kausalya still alive, it seems life is full of sorrow, and death does not come when prayed for."

Sumantra on entering the eighth room found the king, pale and cast down with sorrow, seated in a yellow-coloured room. Then Sumantra, after making proper obeisance to the king, reported Rama's speech to the king and Dasaratha fainted from grief.

Kausalya and Sumitra then raised the king and began to weep. Kausalya said to Dasaratha, "Why do you not talk to him who has brought message from him? Do you now feel ashamed by sending Rama into the forest? Why do you not talk to Sumantra? That Kaikeyi whom you fear is not here. So speak to him freely."

Kausalya then herself fainted on the ground and loud cries rose from the palace.

When after being fanned, Dasaratha regained his consciousness, he asked Sumantra to come before him. Sumantra then, covered with dust, appeared before the king, and Dasaratha questioned him with sigh :

"Tell me where is now my righteous Rama? What food he takes? Unaccustomed to privations how he is bearing all such hardships? How he sleeps on the ground? How he is passing his time in the forest full of ferocious animals and poisonous snakes? How did they walk on foot with delicate Janaki with them? You are happy as you have seen them last. What Rama has said? What Lakshmana has said? And what Sita has said? Tell me everything about Rama; I shall sustain my life with those tidings."

Then Sumantra in clasped palms said, "O great king, righteous Rama bowing down his head and with joined hands said, 'Sumantra! convey my words at the feet of my father, and my greetings and news of my welfare to all the royal ladies. Tell mother Kausalya that I

shall stick to the path of virtue, and she shall properly worship the Fire in the fire-worshipping hall and minister unto the feet of my father, and also bear himself properly in her behaviour towards my other mothers. A king is adorable though junior in age, so she should honour Bharata as the rightful sovereign. Convey my good wishes to Bharata and tell him that it is not proper to depose old father. So let him continue to be the king and let Bharata rule on his behalf.'

"Rama paused and then with tearful eyes said to me, 'Sumantra, you should look upon my mother as your own mother.'

"Lakshmana angrily wanted to know the cause why the king banished his son. And Sita hitherto unacquainted with sorrow began to shed silent tears. I then returned with the empty chariot. At Sringeripura I stayed long with Guhaka in the expectation that Rama might again send for me. At the time of returning, the horses began to shed hot tears and they could not carry the car as before. In thy kingdom, even trees full of blossoms and buds look sad for the calamity that has befallen Rama. The rivers and pools have become hot and their waters unclean; the lotuses have closed their petals, and the woods and grass have withered up. Fishes and aquatic birds are submerged in water, all animals are listless, even the beasts of prey do not roam about, and the forest appears to be dumb and stupefied with grief on account of Rama. The flowers both on land and water do no longer possess their former fragrance and freshness, and fruits have become tasteless. The bowers are lonely and the birds are mute, and the gardens do not look at all charming. O king, when I

entered Ayodhya none greeted me, and the people sighed for Rama. They began to shed tears in grief when they beheld the royal car returning without Rama. The people of Ayodhya have become dejected and are heaving windy sighs. Every one is cheerless, even the horses and elephants have become spiritless. Ayodhya appears to be as wretched, as Kausalya deprived of her son."

Hearing the words of Sumantra, the king Dasaratha addressed him in a voice choked with grief, "I do not consult with aged people capable of offering advice when I promised for Rama's banishment being exhorted by Kaikeyi; without consulting my friends and courtiers I have at the request of a woman rashly done this thing. It seems to me that this calamity has befallen us surely through the influence of Destiny for the purpose of destroying this line.

"Sumantra, if I have done you any good, please take me to Rama. I am dying for him. Ah! where is now that pearl-toothed hero? My end is near and I am dying like a destitute."

Dasaratha then spoke to Kausalya, "I have fallen into an ocean of grief for absence of Rama. The sighs are its waves and eddies, movements of arms are fishes in it, crying is its deep murmuring sound, Kaikeyi its submarine fire, and the words of Kuvja are crocodiles and sharks, the promised boons are its shores and its width is the exile of Rama, tears like rivers are rushing to it; Ah! I pine for Lakshmana and Rama."

Dasaratha fainted again and Kausalya began to tremble in all her limbs like one possessed by an evil spirit and implored Sumantra again and again to take

him to Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Sumantra then consoling her said, "Rama is living in the forest with an undisturbed mind; and Sita is enjoying her forest-life with him, and self-possessed Lakshmana is engaged in ministering to their good. The beauty of Sita, like the shine of the moon, has not lost its lustre on account of inclement weather, sun-shine or fatigue. Her feet are not now dyed with lac but they are naturally of purple hue, as if painted with lac dye, and looked like lotus-buds. She still now wear ornaments and with her tinkling anklets imitates the swan in her gait. Don't be overwhelmed with sorrow for them."

Kausalya then with tearful eyes turned to Dasaratha and accused him for banishing Rama without any just cause. She asked, "How the eldest brother will enjoy the kingdom, once ruled over by the younger one? The tiger does not touch food gathered by another. And who is the best of all men cannot have an inclination for things already tasted by another. Clarified butter, Kusha, sacrificial cakes, stakes of wood, once used in a sacrifice, cannot be used in another. So how Rama will accept the kingdom once enjoyed by Bharata like Soma, when the best body of the liquor has been drunk? As the fish destroys its own brood, so you have ruined Rama. A woman has got three great stays in life; the first is husband, the second is son and the third is her relatives; and you are no more mine as you have sent Rama into exile."

Dasaratha was overwhelmed with grief and thought about the cause of his miseries. After a deep and long thought he found out the cause, and he remembered how through ignorance he had committed a sinful act

by killing a hermit-boy, hitting him with a shaft—aiming at him from the direction of the sound. Dasaratha then addressing Kausalya said, "Oh Lady, you are affectionate even towards your enemies, be pleased with me. Virtuous women regard their husbands as living gods, be they accomplished or not." Kausalya began to shed tears like a cloud in the rains and apologised for her harsh words and said :

"My Lord, I have regard for religion and I know you are truthful. I have used unpleasant words being beside myself with sorrow for the absence of my son.

"Wisdom and patience are destroyed by sorrow, so there is no enemy like sorrow. This is the fifth night that Rama has left for the forest, but it seems, as if, five years have elapsed. There is an ocean of sorrow in my heart."

CHAPTER XXV

ANDHA MUNI'S TALE

Night came. Dasaratha fell asleep, but his sleep was soon broken by the thoughts of Rama, and the recollection of his sinful act—killing a hermit's son—rose in his mind. Dasaratha then spoke to afflicted Kausalya :

"O queen, a man reaps the consequences of his acts, good or bad, according to the nature of his deeds. He is a child who does not calculate about the probable consequences of his act before he actually does it. I was a fool in cutting down the mango tree and watering at the root of a useless Palas, so I have been rightly disappointed. Now hear me why such a calamity has fallen on me :

'When in my youthful days, I learnt the art of archery, I could then hit a thing from the mere direction of its sound without seeing the thing itself. The people, therefore, called me 'the piercer of the sound.' During these days, I committed a great sin through ignorance, but a poison never ceases to act because a child has drunk it through ignorance.

"When I was a prince, and before my marriage with you, once I set out for hunting in the lustful rainy season. When the sun retired to the south by drying up the sap of the earth, intense heat declined and humid clouds were seen hanging on the horizon. Peacocks, *chatakas* and frogs began to croak in joy. The branches of the trees were being shaken by force of the wind and rain, and the birds, with the surface of their wings wet with rain with great difficulty took shelter in them. The mountains overflowed with rivulets and streams, and their waters being mixed up with mineral substances and ashes flowed in snake-like zigzag course. At that time, I felt a great desire for hunting, and thereupon, to kill buffaloes, elephants and other beasts that might come to water for their drink at night, I repaired to the bank of the Saraju in my car.

"At last, everything was enveloped in darkness and I heard in the waters of the Saraju a gurgling sound like that of filling water into pitcher, as is often produced by an elephant when it drinks. I then took up a deadly shaft from my quiver and sent it towards the direction from which the sound proceeded. As soon as the arrow went flying, I heard the groans and cries of a man! He was, in truth, a hermit! He was struck in the heart and fell into water. Then the injured man

said, 'I am a hermit, why have you struck me with an arrow? I came to the lonely river to fetch water at night. What have I done? I live on wild fruits and roots and do nothing that may pain anybody. This is a highly reprehensible act. I am not, however, sorry for my own death, but I am sorry for the distress that will befall my old parents. I am their only support. Who will maintain them in my absence? Thus all of us have been struck down by one shaft. Who is that greedy boy that has killed us thus?'

"Queen, as I heard these piteous words from the hermit-boy at night, my bow dropped down from my hand, I was overwhelmed with dark apprehension and sorrow, and slowly proceeded towards the spot. On coming there I found an ascetic struck by the arrow. His matted locks were dishevelled, he was besmeared with blood and dust, and the pitcher with water was lying on the ground.

"When the hermit saw me standing before him, he said, 'I am a denizen of the forest. I came to the Saraju to fetch water for my parents, why did you strike me? In one shaft you have killed me as well as my blind father and mother. They are weak and thirsty and surely they are anxiously waiting for me. Father doesn't know that I am thus lying on the ground. Even if he comes to know of it what will he do? He is blind and cannot walk. So you yourself go to my father and give him the information. But take care that he may not destroy you. Try to appease him, so that he may not curse you in anger. Your arrow has struck my heart as the river strikes against a sandy coast, and it is giving me great pain. Just extract it from there.'

"When the hermit-boy asked me to extract the arrow I was in a dilemma. If the arrow remained there, it would give him more pain, but if I drew it out, he would die immediately.

"At last the hermit-boy began to sink. His eyes were turned up and his limbs became listless. Seeing me thus overwhelmed with grief the ascetic with great difficulty said, 'O king, remove from your mind the idea that you have killed a Brahmana, for I am not so. I am born of a Vaisya father and a Sudra mother.'

"I then extracted that arrow from his heart and he began to roll in agony and he gave up his life by fixing his sacred look on me. I was overwhelmed with great sorrow.

"I was struck with deep remorse and greatly repented for my act, and long thought what was the best thing to do. At last, I took up the pitcher filled with water and went to the hermitage. There I found the blind and infirm hermit-couple, like helpless birds with their wings clipped. There was nobody else who could move them from one place to another. At that time they were talking about their son. Though I had destroyed all their hopes, still they were waiting for their son's return with water. I was already extremely distressed with sorrow and remorse, but on entering the hermitage I felt myself more wretched.

"The old hermit hearing the sound of my foot-steps mistook me for his son and said, 'Why are you so late, my boy? Bring the water soon, your mother was greatly anxious for your delay in the river. You are our only support, and the eyes of the blind.' Our lives

depend upon you. But why are you silent ? Why don't you reply to my words ?

"I was greatly alarmed at this, and concealing my real feeling I said with difficulty :

"O sage, I am Dasaratha of Kshatriya race. I am not your son. I have committed a very hateful act and I am extremely sorry and repentant for it. Sir, I was waiting at the banks of the Saraju for killing elephants and other animals that might come for drink at night. Then I heard a gurgling noise. I thought that an elephant was drinking water, and hit an arrow aiming at the sound. But coming on to the edge of the river I found a hermit-boy lying on the ground. At his words I took out the arrow from his heart, and he died lamenting for his old parents, as soon as the arrow was drawn out. O sage, I have killed your son without my knowledge. What has been done cannot be undone. Now command me what I am to do.

"The sage could have reduced me to ashes then and there but he forbore and said, 'O king, if you did not come to inform me, your head would have crumbled down from your shoulders. Not to speak of a Kshatriya, such an impious act committed with knowledge could have dragged down Indra from his throne. You are still alive because you have committed the act through inadvertance, or you would have been destroyed with your family. However, take us to the place where my son is lying prostrate.'

"Then I took them to the bank of the Saraju and made them touch the body of their son whereupon they fell upon the dead body of their son and began to cry bitterly.

"The hermit said, 'Why don't you greet us today ? Why are you lying on the ground ? Are you angry with us ? Cast your eyes on your mother. Why don't you embrace her and talk to her ? Henceforth whose sweet chanting of the Shastras shall I listen to ? Who will offer oblations into fire in the evening and bathe us ? I am old, infirm and absolutely helpless. Who will now procure me fruits and roots ? How shall I maintain your mother ? I ask you not to go alone to the abode of Death. Tomorrow we all three shall go there. We shall soon die in your absence. I shall go to the region of Death and speak to Death himself, and ask him to excuse me. Alas ! you are innocent and sinless, but this sinful Kshatriya has killed you. But through my force of truth you will attain the happy region attained by the heroes after death. Dost thou attain the same state as has been attained by the emperors Sagara, Saiva, Dilipa, Janmejaya, Nahusha and Dhundhumar. Yours will be the blissful state that is obtained after death by the study of the Vedas, penance, devotion to a single wife,¹ gift of lands and thousands of kine, serving the guru, or by the observance of religious rites and fasting. But he who has killed you will attain evil state after death.'

"Thus saying, the ascetic with his wife performed the watery rites for their son.

"After this the pious son of the hermit assuming a celestial form ascended the heaven with Indra and consoled his old parents saying that he had attained the

¹ Strict monogamy was held in great esteem. Siva thus blesses Parvati, "May you obtain a husband solely devoted to you."—Kalidas.

highest heaven by serving them and asked them to come to him without delay.

"Thereafter the hermit with his wife performing the watery rites of their son said, 'Oh king, kill me now. You have killed my only son so I won't feel any pain of death but hear my curse. As I die from the grief for the death of my son, so you will die from grief for your own son.'

"The hermit after cursing me got into the funeral pyre with his wife and ascended heaven thereby."

CHAPTER XXVI

DASARATHA'S DEATH

"Oh queen, the sin I have committed through ignorance in my childhood has now revived in my memory, and as unhealthy food produces disease, so this evil act will produce its due consequence."

Dasaratha paused and again burst forth in tears, "Oh queen, surely I shall die of this intense grief for my son. I can no more see anything, please touch my body. It is not possible to meet any one after death. I could survive, if Rama touched me now. I have behaved improperly towards Rama and I justly suffer for it. Oh queen, I cannot see you any more, my memory is failing and I am finding the angels of death hovering about me and urging me towards the dreadful abode of death. Alas! I shall no more see Rama. As the sun dries up drops of water, so absence of Rama is scorching my soul. I consider them to be (as lucky as) gods who will witness Rama's face after fourteen years of exile, with eyes expanded as the lotus-petal, well-drawn brows, beautiful teeth and graceful nose and countenance as

beautiful as the autumnal moon. I feel, I am rapidly sinking, and my senses can no more feel sound, taste or touch. For want of consciousness my senses are becoming benumbed, as the light of the lamp grows dim for want of oil. As the impetuous current of a river destroys its bank, so this internal grief will bring about my end. Oh Rama, my darling! where are you now? Oh Kausalya, I do not see you any more. Ah, Sumitra! Oh cruel Kaikeyi!" Thus lamenting the king breathed his last at midnight in the presence of Kausalya and Sumitra.

When the night was over, eulogists, bards, geneologists and singers came to the palace and began to sing the praise of the king and the palm-players began to strike their palms by reciting the deeds of the previous kings. At the sound of their claps the birds, perched on the trees, were roused from sleep and began to chirp. The Vinas began to be played and pure-charactered women skilled in service came there, and persons acquainted with the rites of bath brought water in golden pitchers perfumed with Harisandal scent. For auspiciousness, chaste women and virgins brought Ganges water, wearing apparel, and ornaments and cows for being touched. All waited with those articles for the king till the sun-rise. But they grew apprehensive as they were disappointed by delay.

Then the ladies that were near about Dasaratha tried to rouse the king by gentle words, but they found no beating of his heart or pulse. They were greatly alarmed about the king's life and began to tremble like the blades of grass. They then concluded, perhaps last night's apprehension of the king came to be true.

Being prostrate with grief for the king, Kausalya and Sumitra fell unconscious. Rama's mother was lying by the king by contracting her body. She looked pale and dark like a star hid in darkness. Sumitra's face was stained with tears.

Finding them in a swoon other women began to cry, and after some time Kausalya and Sumitra came to their senses. They rose from the bed but when they touched the body of the king they shrieked and fell on the ground again.

Kausalya rolled on the ground and being covered with dusts she looked like a star dropped from the sky.

Kaikeyi and others lost their senses by incessantly crying for their husband.

All were frightened by the cries that rose from the palace. Dasaratha in his death looked like an extinguished fire, and as a dried-up ocean.

Kausalya then took Dasaratha's head on her lap and addressing Kaikeyi said in tearful eyes, "Now you attain your object of desire and enjoy the kingdom by getting rid of all your thorns. You have destroyed the clan of Raghu, and Kuvja is at the root of it. You know not through your greed you have taken poison administered by another."

The counsellors seeing Kausalya crying thus by embracing the dead body of the king, they removed the body from that place according to the direction of Vasishtha and other Brahmins and preserved the body carefully by immersing it in oil, for there was no son to perform the funeral obsequies of the king.

The counsellors placed the corpse in a vat full of oil and they burst forth in tears saying, "Oh king, we have

already lost sweet-speeched and truthful Rama, why have you then left us so ? We have been all stranded by your death."

The city looked gloomy in absence of the king. Men and women cursed Kaikeyi and shed tears for the king. Thus the day declined in sorrow.

CHAPTER XXVII

VASISHTHA'S ADVICE

When the long night of sorrow was over, the great saint Markandeya, Vamadeva, Kasyapa, Gautama, Jabali and other Brahmins came to the royal court and discussed various matters concerning the administration with the ministers.

They being unable to decide anything themselves submitted to Vasishtha :

"King Dasaratha is dead. Rama has repaired to the forest with Lakshmana and Sita. Bharata and Satrughna are now in their maternal uncle's house at Rajagriha. It is incumbent to install one of Ikshwaku's line on the throne, or the kingdom will precipitate into ruin in the absence of a king. Where there is no king, the clouds do not rain there, seeds are not sown, the son does not obey the father, nor wife the husband, and it is always difficult to protect their wealth and women. Great mischiefs ensue to the people. In a kingless country, nobody feels inclined to build a house, or to construct a garden, or to gather in assemblies. In a kingless realm, Brahmins cease to perform their sacrifices, and all festivities end there. Actors, dancers desist from showing their skill, and social progress

ceases there. In a kingless country, businessmen are disappointed in their expectation of wealth, and persons versed in ancient lore give up reciting those things for want of an audience. In a kingless city, young maidens decked in gold do not go to the garden in the evening for their sport. In a kingless country, cowherds and cultivators do not sleep at night by keeping their doors open, nor pleasure-seeking people go out in their swift cars in the company of bright women. In a kingless country, merchants are afraid to move with their merchandise to distant places and no one can hear the clappings of persons engaged in archery. In a kingless city, big tuskers of sixty years old do not ply along the streets with tinkling bells round their necks. In a kingless country, one cannot protect what he has, nor can he procure what he does not possess. In a kingless country, the learned do not discuss the Shastras, and pious people have little heart for offering dakshina, garlands or sweets for the worship of deities. In a kingless city, princes besmeared with sandal and Aguru do not appear like vernal trees.

"A kingdom without a king is in fact a river without water, a forest without grass, a cow without a cowherd. In this state it is difficult to preserve one's life and men destroy each other as the fish do among themselves. The atheists who are punished for slighting religion raise their heads in this state of anarchy. The king is the eye of the people; as the eye protects the body from injury and contributes to its welfare, so the king protects the people. He is the protector of truth and religion and upholder of social dignity. If there were no king—a judge of right and wrong, there

would be no distinction between things as when enveloped in utter darkness. In a kingless country, disputants cannot decide their points. As smoke reveals fire, and pinion a chariot, so king Dasaratha represented the kingdom through him. Now he is dead. We therefore ask for your advice."

Vasishtha hearing these words said, "Bharata, upon whom the king has conferred the kingdom, is now residing at his maternal uncle's place with Satrughna. Let us send envoys on swift horses to him."

Vasishtha then addressing the envoys named, Siddhartha, Vijaya, and Asakenandana said, "Remove your sorrow, go to king Kekaya with silken apparels and ornaments and tell Bharata on my behalf to come immediately to Ayodhya where his presence is urgently wanted but take care don't speak about Rama's exile and Dasaratha's death."

Then the envoys being furnished with the necessities left for Kekaya, as directed by Vasishtha. After crossing the Malini they proceeded by the west of Apartala and went towards the north of Pralamva.

Then crossing the Ganges at Hastinapura and arriving at Panchala, they went westward through Kurujangal and on their way they saw vast expanses of water strewn with full-blown lotuses, and met translucent streams. After crossing the Saradanda they bowed to the Satyopayachana tree on its bank and then entered the city of Kulinga.

After passing through Teyobhibhavana, they arrived at Abhikala. They then crossed the Ikshumati. They then went through Vahlhika towards the Sadaman hill. There they saw the foot-prints of Vishnu, and

then passed the Vipasha and the Shamali streams. They met on their way elephants, lions, tigers, deer and various other animals and after proceeding some distance they reached the city of Girivraja.¹

CHAPTER XXVIII

BHARATA

That very night the envoys entered the city, Bharata had a bad dream towards the dawn and he became anxious for it. His friends tried to remove his anxiety by their conversations.

Some one played on the lute, some caused the dancing girls to dance before Bharata, some read mirth-provoking comedies, but Bharata could not join them in their jollity.

At last, a bosom friend of his asked, "My friend, why do you look so indifferent in spite of the attempts of your friends to cheer you up?"

Bharata said, "Hear me, why I feel anxious today. Towards the end of the night I saw my father in a dream. He looked pale, and I saw him falling head-long from a mountain-peak into a filthy pit² and I saw him floating on that dirty stream and drinking oil from the hollow of his joined palms with a laugh. I then saw him diving into oil with an oily body, after partaking, with a bent-down head, rice mixed with oil again and again. I also beheld as if the ocean had grown dry, the moon has fallen on the ground; as if the earth had been enveloped in darkness, burning fire had

1 Modern Rajgirh near Patna.

2 In the original—a lake full of cowdung.

abruptly been extinguished, the earth riven, trees and mountains destroyed with smoke, and the tusks of the elephant on which the king rides had fallen into pieces ! And I saw my father clad in sable clothes seated on a dark iron seat, and dark, tawny women were beating him. He was driving fast, wearing a red garland, towards the south in a car yoked with asses. Women clad in red were laughing at him, and grim-visaged Rakshasis were dragging him by force. I had such an awful dream towards the close of night. Now, it is certain that one of us either the king, Rama, Lakshmana, Satrugna or myself must die. The smoke of the funeral pyre of the person is soon seen to rise, who is seen in a dream driving in a car yoked with asses. I have grown anxious for this, this is why I am not greeting you with my speech. My throat has become perched. Though at present I do not find any cause of fear, yet I am apprehending danger at every step. I have got a grating voice, and feel my life as vapid. And my heart is not at ease at this quite unexpected dream, and my apprehensions about the king cannot be allayed."

When Bharata was narrating his dream to his friends, the fatigued envoys entered the well-protected, beautiful city of Rajagriha and appeared before king Kekaya and Judhajit, and after receiving their hospitality they came to Bharata. After greeting him duly they said, "O prince, Vasishta and the ministers enquire about your welfare, and they have asked you to set out immediately, as there is a very urgent matter which may be defeated by delay, and you will have to attend to that. We have brought costly apparels

and ornaments, present them to your maternal grandfather and maternal uncle."

Bharata after accepting the articles asked, "How is the king doing? Are worshipful Rama and Lakshmana safe? Is everything all right with virtuous Kausalya and Sumitra? How is my mother Kaikeyi proud of her attainments?"

The envoys humbly replied, "They are all doing well. Now Kamala, the goddess of fortune, craves your presence, please ask to get your chariot immediately ready"

Bharata then went to inform his maternal grandfather and said, "Envoys have come for me. I shall now go to my father and shall come back again when you send for me."

Then king Kekaya kissing Bharata's head replied, "Kaikeyi has obtained the happiness of getting a worthy son in you. I give you leave to go. Communicate to your parents, Vasishtha, Rama, Lakshmana and others that we are doing well."

After this, king Kekaya presented to Bharata excellent elephants, variegated blankets, deer-skins, domesticated dogs, big and strong like tigers and endowed with formidable teeth. He also gave him two thousand beads of gold, and sixteen hundred horses, swift asses, and also a number of servants for Bharata's retinue.

But Bharata grew highly anxious on account of his evil dream and for the hurry of the envoys. With Satrugna, Bharata then set out from his quarters after greeting his maternal grandfather, Judhajit and other relations.

After a journey of seven nights Bharata arrived in front of Ayodhya. And at the sight of Ayodhya, Bharata spoke to his charioteer :

"Look, there is the famous city of Ayodhya. But from a distance it appears to be cheerless today. It is a crowded city, but how is it that it looks like a deserted one ! Even the soil of Ayodhya seems to be dark. Formerly, there was a great din in the city, but everything seems to be hushed in silence today. Formerly, pleasure-seeking people used to enter these gardens in the evening and leave them in the morning but they seem to be in mourning for their absence. O charioteer, the city appears to me like a forest today. I do not see important persons going through the streets on their elephants or horses. Bowers and other abodes of pleasure where inebriated lovers meet, seem to be solitary and silent ! Leaves are falling off from every roadside tree, and the sweet notes of birds are no more to be heard, bracing air seems no more to blow laden with the perfume of sandal, Agru and incense. Why musical instruments have ceased to be played ? I find ominous signs all around. My heart acheth at the sight."

Saying these, with an anxious and depressed heart, Bharata entered the city through the Vaijayanta gate.

At his sight the sentries stood up and after saluting him followed him out of respect. Bharata asked them to return to their posts, and he said to his charioteer :

"Why the envoys betrayed such indecent haste ? I have dark misgiving in my mind. My anxiety is growing more intense. I see around me all inauspicious signs. Temples are not decorated with wreaths and

flowers. The courts are unclean. Merchants have closed their shops, all business seem to have stopped. I find the people no more gay as before, but sad and anxious."

With these words Bharata entered the palace and he was greatly shocked by the cheerless look of the great city.

With a depressed heart and downcast look Bharata entered his father's quarters but missing him there he went to his mother.

CHAPTER XXIX

BHARATA AND KAIKEYI

Kaikeyi seeing her son returned home, rose from her golden seat in delight, Bharata too bowed to her on entering the room.

Kaikeyi then embraced him and after kissing his head asked him fondly, "Tell me, my boy, when you left your maternal uncle's place? Don't you feel fatigued by the journey? How are your maternal grandfather and uncle doing? Were you not happy in your stay there?"

Lotus-eyed Bharata replied, "Mother, seven nights hence I left the city of my maternal grandfather. Your father and brother are doing well. My men have been borne down with fatigue in carrying the presents of king Kekaya to me. I have, therefore, come ahead of them. However, I now ask you one thing. Why the emissaries of my father have brought me so hurriedly here? Your golden bedstead appears to be vacant. Father often lives in your quarters but why I do not

find him today. I want to bow down at his feet, tell me where he is now. Is he now in mother Kausalya's palace? I do not find any one of the Ikshwaku family in good spirits. What is the cause of this?"

Thereupon, Kaikeyi being exceedingly delighted at the prospect of Bharata's kingdom said, "My boy, that performer of sacrifices, the refuge of the good, the king has attained the inevitable end of all creatures."

"Ah alas!" Bharata exclaimed in sorrow and fainted on the ground with outstretched arms.

Then Kaikeyi finding her son prostrate on the ground, like a cut-down tree, raised him up and affectionately said, "My boy! why are you lying on the ground? Just arise. A cultured man like you is never overwhelmed with grief. Your intelligence never leaves you as brightness never leaves the solar disc."

Bharata wept long, rolling on the dust. Then addressing his mother, Bharata said:

"Mother, I went to maternal uncle's house with the happy thought that father would install Rama on the throne, but I see everything has been altered. Mother, my father has died of what disease in my absence? Alas! where is he who used to brush off dust from my childish limbs? Happy are they who performed the last rites of my father. However, now inform Rama immediately of my arrival, he is my brother, a friend, and father to me. I am his devoted servant. I shall bow down at Rama's feet, he is my refuge. Now tell me what were the last words of the king. I am most eager to hear them."

Kaikeyi said, "Your father breathed his last, saying, "Alas, Rama! Alas, Lakshmana! Alas, Sita!" And

smarting under the grip of death the king said, "They are happy who will witness Rama returned to Ayodhya with Lakshmana and Janaki."

Bharata asked, "Mother, where is virtuous Rama now putting up with Sita and Lakshmana?"

Then Kaikeyi thinking that Bharata would be glad at the news of Rama's exile, said, "My child, the prince clad in bark has repaired to the Dandaka forest with Lakshmana and Sita."

Bharata was fully acquainted with the customs of his family and at these words he grew apprehensive about the conduct of Rama and anxiously asked :

"Has Rama robbed a Brahmana or his property? Has he injured any innocent man, whether rich or poor? Did he take any fancy on another's wife? Now tell me, why he has been banished to the Dandaka forest."

Then his proud, volatile mother cheerfully observed, "Rama has neither robbed a Brahmana, nor he has injured any innocent person. He has not even eyed anybody's wife, but my boy, hearing of his installation I prayed to the king for Rama's exile and your installation on the throne. The king had promised me two boons previously, so for the observance of truth he has conferred the kingdom on you. Rama is now in exile with Sumitra's son and Sita. The king died being separated from his son. You now ascend the throne. I have done all these for you. This city and the kingdom now belong to you. Shake off your sorrows. Perform the funeral rites with the help of Brahmanas versed in rituals and then ascend the throne."

CHAPTER XXX

BHARATA'S REPLY

Hearing these shocking words Bharata with deep remorse said, "Alas! at one and the same time I have lost my father and father-like brother. What shall I do with the kingdom? You have banished my brother and killed my father and thus caused immeasurable grief by adding insult to the injury. You are destroyer of our clan. You have strewn the path of happiness of this family with thorns. Virtuous Rama used to love and respect you as his own mother. Even far-sighted mother Kausalya looked upon you as her sister and you have sent her son into exile. What benefit you have thereby gained? You are too greedy. Perhaps you know not how I looked upon Rama. How shall I protect the kingdom without Rama and Lakshmana? I would not have hesitated to abandon you, if Rama did not look upon you as his mother. How could you have such a wicked intention, foreign to our family traditions? In our family it is the eldest son that ascends the throne while others remain under him. It now appears that you are not conversant even with the laws of sovereignty. How could you being born of a king have forgotten this? Your intentions, however, will never be fulfilled. I shall immediately bring back Rama and shall live as his slave."

Bharata began to growl like a lion in grief and anger.

Bharata again resumed in wrath, "You cruel woman! leave the kingdom at once. You are impious and you have no right to weep for your husband. What great offence Rama and Dasaratha had committed

to you that you have sent one to exile and another to death's door? You have committed such a great sin by banishing Rama to the forest that I am afraid I shall incur public odium for being your son. You have put me into eternal disgrace. You are my enemy in the form of my mother. Don't utter my name with those lips. It is for you that I have become fatherless and an object of public derision.

"To what pit of hell thou art condemned for depriving virtuous Kausalya of her son? Don't you know that eldest Rama is dear unto all? A son born of the limbs of his mother comes from her heart, therefore he is dearer to her mother than all other relations.

"Just listen to a story. Once upon a time the celestial cow Surabhi while going through the heavenly region beheld two of her sons yoked to the plough. Seeing them fatigued on account of ploughing the field uptil noon, she became extremely sorry and began to shed tears. At that time Indra was passing below her and drops of her tears fell upon Indra's body. Indra then looked up and found Surabhi weeping. Indra grew highly anxious at this and enquired whether the Gods are well, and as to why she was weeping. Surabhi replied that there was nothing to say about the Gods but pointing to her sons she said, 'Look here, how my two sons are labouring hard in that undulating field. I have been greatly distressed by their sufferings. There are no dearer things than one's issue.'

"From that time Indra realised son to be the dearest thing in life and entertained great regard for Surabhi. Now consider if Surabhi in spite of innumerable sons could be so sorry as that what would be the condition

of Kausalya having one son only. You will have to suffer for the sin of robbing her of her only son. Now after performing the obsequies of my father I shall bring back Rama from the forest and I shall myself embrace the forest-life. I shall consider myself fortunate and my stain will be removed, if I succeed in bringing back Rama to Ayodhya."

Bharata then began to breathe heavily with anger and sorrow, and he threw away all the ornaments from his body. And he fell down like the banner of Sakra after the festivity was over.¹

CHAPTER XXXI

BHARATA AND KAUSALYA

On regaining his senses after a long time Bharata said to the ministers casting a tearful look on his mother, "I did not hanker for the kingdom nor I deputed my mother for it. I was living far away with Satrughna, so I could not even know that the king made arrangements for the installation of Rama, nor I was aware that Rama has thus been sent into exile with Lakshmana and Janaki."

When Bharata was taking his mother to task, Kausalya hearing the voice of Bharata told Sumitra, "Bharata, the son of crooked Kaikeyi, has come. Bharata is far-sighted and I wish to see him once." Saying this Kausalya in trembling gait repaired to Bharata. At that time Bharata being desirous of seeing

¹ Sometimes great festivities were held in honour of Indra-worship. When the festivities were over, the flag-staff that was raised in honour of Indra was pulled down.

Kausalya, was proceeding with Satrugna to her quarters. Kausalya met him on the way and embraced him in tearful eyes and then addressing Bharata said, "You hankered after kingdom, now enjoy it without any thorn. Your mother has obtained the kingdom for you by extremely cruel means. I know not what she has gained by sending away Rama to the forest. Now let her send me there where Rama with navel of golden hue resides. Or, I shall myself go there with Sumitra or you take me there where Rama is engaged in religious meditations. This vast kingdom now belongs to you."

When Kausalya used these hard words Bharata felt pained like one whose sores are pricked with a needle and he fainted at Kausalya's feet.

After regaining his consciousness Bharata said with folded palms, "Oh worshipful lady, I don't know anything about it. I am quite innocent of this. Then why do you censure me for this? Don't you know that I have great and unflinching devotion and affection for Rama? What shall I say more, the person according to whose wish truthful Rama has gone to the forest, though his (or her) intelligence be refined by the Shastras, will be a slave to vice and sin. May he commit that sin which is incurred by one answers the calls of nature facing the sun or kicks a sleeping cow. May he reap that sin which is incurred by a master who does not pay his servant after the work is done, or attempts to injure the king who governs his subject like his son, or the sin that befalls a king who does not govern well by taking a sixth part of the income of his subjects, or the sin that befalls a man who denies Dakshina after the sacrifice. May he who has sent long-armed, broad-

shouldered Rama, bright as the sun and the moon to the forest not live long till Rama's restoration to the throne. May he who has approved of Rama's exile may feed on Payasa, Krishara and goat's flesh which have not been offered in sacrifice. Oh noble lady, may he who has approved of Rama's exile live in luxury but without any issue and without getting a desirable wife. May he incur the shame that befalls a person who kills a king, a woman, a boy or an old man, or the demerit of a person who forsakes a trusted servant. Let him who has sent Rama to forest maintain his family by selling lac, iron, honey, meat and poison. May he beg for his bread like a nomadic, clad in rags and holding a skull in his hands. May he be addicted to wine, woman and dice, may he be overwhelmed with passion and anger. May he be robbed of all his wealth by robbers, may he incur the demerit as he who sleeps both in the morning and in the evening, and may he reap the sin that is reaped by an incendiary or who commits adultery with his preceptor's wife, or who wrongs his friends. Let him be addicted to all sorts of evils and let him suffer from infirmity and poverty being saddled with a big family. He will disregard his own chaste wife close by him after ablutions at the end of her monthly course, and will incur the demerit like him who kills a cow having a young calf. He will reap the sin like one who fouls drinking water, administers poison, refuses drink to a thirsty person having water in his possession, or who quarrels with others about their respective faiths and gods as well as he who listens to those disputes."

Kausalya then said, "Oh my son, your words pain me more. I know you have not swerved from virtue,

and for this reason you will attain the noble region of pious men."

Thus saying Kausalya took Bharata on her lap and began to weep bitterly. Bharata's heart was rent with sorrow and he began to heave repeatedly deep sighs.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE CREMATION

When the day dawned Vasishtha said to Bharata, "O prince! it is useless to lament any more. Now it is time to cremate the body of the king; therefore, make arrangements for it."

Bharata then bowed to Vasishtha and placed the body on the ground, raising it from the oil vat. Dasaratha's face was pale and he looked as if buried in sleep. Seeing the body of the king thus prostrate on the ground, Bharata broke forth being overwhelmed with grief:

"O king! what wrong thou hast committed by banishing Rama and Lakshmana during my absence! I have been already deprived of Rama, now where have you gone leaving this poor soul? Rama has gone to the forest and you too are dead. Who can now devote himself to the task of protecting what the people possess and in securing what they do not? Oh father! the earth has been widowed by your death, and the city looks like a gloomy moonless night."

Vasishtha, seeing Bharata bewailing thus, said, "Oh prince, don't be overwhelmed with grief but perform the funeral rites of the king with an undisturbed mind."

Then Bharata at the words of Vasishtha asked the Ritwiks, Priests, and Acharyas to make haste. Ritwiks and Priests began to offer oblations into the fire that

had already been brought out from the fire-chamber.

Then the servants in sorrowful hearts carried the body of the king to the bank of the Saraju in a car. A large number of people went ahead distributing gold, silver and cloths. In the meantime the funeral pyre was prepared with Incense, Sandal, Aguru, Sarala, Padmaka, Devadaru and other fragrant things. The Ritwiks placed the body of the king in the funeral pyre and began to utter "mantras" offering oblations into the fire for the purification of the king in the next world. Singers of Samaveda began to sing the Sama-hymns. The queens and the aged people came in their litters, went round the king with the Ritwiks and were crying like Crouchis.

Then the queens bathed in the Saraju and performed with Bharata the watery rites for the dead and entering the city they passed ten days in great privations, by lying on the ground at night.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FUNERAL RITES

After the passing of ten days, Bharata performed Sradh Ceremony of the king and on the twelfth day for the welfare of the king in the next world, Bharata performed Sapindakaran ceremony of the second month, and for the spiritual welfare of his father conferred on the Brahmins profuse wealth, food, goats, cows, servants, horses and cars.

On the thirteenth day Bharata came to the bank of the Saraju to gather the ashes of his father and being overwhelmed with grief began to cry aloud on seeing the crimsoned spot covered with ashes and embers

where the bones of his father had been reduced to ashes and thus occurred the dissolution of his body, Bharata fainted in sorrow. People raised him up as they do the fallen banner of Indra. Satrughna too became mad with sorrow seeing Bharata thus smitten with grief. He walked up and down with restless steps saying, "We are now overwhelmed in that sea of sorrow that owes its origin to Manthara, and whose fierce monster is Kaikeyi. Where hast thou gone leaving tender-hearted Bharata? Who will now look after us? Strange that the earth was not rent into pieces after losing her virtuous lord like you! Alas! you are dead and Rama has gone to the forest, how can we live then? I shall cast myself into flames and shall never return to Ayodhya in a fatherless and brotherless state, but will repair to the forest."

The people were greatly distressed hearing Bharata and Satrughna lamenting thus, and the two princes rolled on the earth like two bulls in agony having their horns broken.

Then Vasishtha raised Bharata from the ground and addressing him said, "O prince, this is the thirteenth day since the cremation of your father. The only thing remains to be done is to collect his bones. Why do you delay then? It is not proper for you to be overwhelmed with grief since hunger, thirst, grief, ignorance, infirmity and death are inevitable in human life."

Then Bharata and Satrughna wiped off their eyes and looked like a banner of Indra sullied by wind and rain.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE RESOLUTION OF BHARATA

Then Sumitra's son, Satrughna, finding Bharata resolved to go to Rama, said, "There is no doubt that Rama who gives shelter to all in distress, is our refuge. A woman has sent such Rama to the forest. Worshipful Lakshmana is powerful, why did he not deliver Rama by subduing father? The king who takes to unrighteous' course at the words of a woman deserves to be suppressed even from the moral point of view."

When Satrughna was saying this to Bharata, the hump-backed came near the door, wearing royal robes, besmearing her limbs with sandal-paste, and adorning her body with ornaments; and for having put on a girdle round her waist she looked like a female monkey tied with a rope.

Seeing that vicious hump-backed at the door Satrughna dragged her by force and said to Bharata :

"Here is that vicious hump-backed wench, the cause of Rama's exile, and father's death. Do with her as you please."

Satrughna, always obedient to Bharata's words addressing the inmates said, "This sorceress has brought miseries to our father and brothers. Let her now feel the consequence."

Saying this, Satrughna took the hump-backed by force, and she began to resound the house with her piteous cries. Her maids got frightened at Satrughna's anger and fearing a similar fate took shelter under Kausalya.

Satrughna began to drag Manthara by force and all her ornaments fell from her body, and the floor of the

oom, with scattered ornaments, looked like the autumnal sky strewn with the stars. Satrughna began to oppress Manthara by force and to abuse Kaikeyi in harsh words. Kaikeyi was greatly alarmed at this and sought protection of Bharata.

Then Bharata seeing Satrughna beside himself with rage said, "A woman should not be killed, so forgive her. I would have killed Kaikeyi, but Rama would depise me as the murderer of my mother. So if you kill this hump-backed woman, he won't speak with us in derision."

At these words Satrughna desisted from the reproachful act and let Manthara off. As soon as Manthara was released, she threw herself at Kaikeyi's feet and began to cry piteously.

On the morning of the fourteenth day, a large number of people collected and said to Bharata :

"King Dasaratha who was our supreme Lord, has gone to heaven by banishing Rama and Lakshmana, so you be our king from today. The kingdom, though it is now without a king, won't come to ruins if the counsellors act with united opinions. The counsellors are waiting for you with all the articles of coronation, so ascend the throne and save us from miseries."

Bharata seeing the articles of coronation said, "Eldest son should ascend the throne, that is the custom of our family. So you should not request me about it. Worshipful Rama should ascend the throne and I shall myself repair to the forest and live there for fourteen years. Now ask my army to get ready, I shall myself bring back Rama from the forest. I shall carry with me the articles of coronation and shall have him

crowned in the forest and shall bring him thence as fire from the place of sacrifice. I shall never fulfil the desire of this so-called mother. Let the artizans prepare my way for the forest. Let them level the uneven paths, and let men capable of going to difficult and inaccessible places accompany me."

Hearing Bharata speaking thus all the people collected there said, "May you be prosperous since you have so nobly resolved to confer the throne on the eldest." And they shed tears in joy.

CHAPTER XXXV

BHARATA'S JOURNEY

Then carpenters, wood-cutters, expert diggers, builders, cobblers, cooks, perfumers, makers of machines and bamboo-made articles, people acquainted with geography, active servants, and forward guides started in advance. When throngs of people rushed out in joy, they resembled like the waves of an agitated ocean heaved up by the full moon. The pioneers with axes and spades went ahead and made paths by clearing the jungles. They cut down many trees, shrubs and rocks, and planted trees where there was none. They levelled many high grounds and filled many deep ditches. Some built bridges, some bored earth and rocks for water and pounded stones into fine dusts. They dug well with raised diases in waterless places. And the way of his army lay through many white plastered pavements, through woods bearing blossoms and rendered vocal by the notes of wild birds. The road was decorated with flags and flowers, and sprinkled with sandal showers. Thus it appeared like a heavenly path.

Those who received orders of pitching tents, set their tents under auspicious stars in the places abounding in sweet fruits, and decorated them profusely. The tents were then surrounded by moats and were decorated with images of sapphire.

Somewhere palaces were built, ramparts with dove-cots were raised and seven-storied towers were raised, on both sides of which stood various kinds of trees and tanks with crystal water and full of fishes.

Towards the end of the night preceding the day on which Bharata was to be consecrated for the coronation ceremony, eulogists began to sing praises of Bharata. Kettle-drums were struck by golden sticks and hundreds of conch-shells were blown to announce the break of the day. Then Bharata rose with a sorrowful heart and asked to stop the music saying, "You must know that I am not the king."

Then addressing Satrughna he said, "You see they have been incited by Kaikeyi in these unjust things. Father has gone to the next world leaving me to infinite miseries, and he who is our master has been banished to the forest. There would not have been such a chaos if he were here."

While saying this, Bharata was overwhelmed with grief.

Then Vasishtha versed in statecraft entered the court, ornamented with gold and gems and sat down upon a golden seat adorned with an elegant cover. He asked the warders soon to fetch Bharata, Satrughna, counsellors and captains. Then intelligent Bharata entered the court full of educated people, rendered bright by

the brilliance of their dress and ornaments, which looked like a full-moon autumnal night.

Seeing Bharata entering the court, Vasishtha said :

"King Dasaratha has repaired to heaven by conferring the earth full of wealth and corns on you. Now get yourself crowned and rule the kingdom."

Prince Bharata was overwhelmed at Vasishtha's speech and thinking of Rama he replied in a voice choked with tears :

"How a man like myself can usurp the throne of virtuous Rama, and being born of king Dasaratha how shall I rob one of his kingdom ? This kingdom and myself belong to Rama. Oh hermit, it is not proper for you to speak to me thus. Eldest Rama, like Dilip and Nahusa, is the best of us all. If I follow this unrighteous course leading to hell, I shall be a stain to the Ikshwaku line. I do not in any way approve of the wrong committed by my mother, and from here I bow down to Rama with my clasped palms. He is the real king of this kingdom and I must follow him."

The courtiers then shed tears in delight at those words of Bharata.

Then Bharata addressing the people said, "If I cannot bring Rama from the forest, I shall live with him like Lakshmana. I shall have to make all necessary arrangements in your presence to bring him back. I have already despatched in advance honorary labourers, active servants and guards. Now I shall set out myself."

Saying this, Bharata, attached to his brother, asked Sumantra to announce his departure to the forest and to mobilise his forces for that. The people and the chieftains were extremely glad at the proposal of bring-

ing back Rama. And wife of every soldier cheerfully spurred her husband to make haste in the matter. The captains sent troops to Bharata in swift conveyances.

Bharata then asked Sumantra to fetch his car soon, and to tell the captains to draw up the forces in marching array.

When the day dawned, Bharata, eager to meet Rama, started in his car, and before him proceeded the counsellors and the priests. Thousands of horses and elephants followed him. Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra gladly accompanied him in glittering cars. The citizens embraced each other in joy and eagerly awaited the arrival of Rama, dark as a cloud and the remover of world's grief. "As the sun dispels all darkness, so his very sight will remove all our sorrows," they said.

Then, famous merchants, jewellers, potters, weavers, smiths, sawers, workers with peacock-feathers,¹ glass makers, perforators of gem, workers in ivory, wool-growers, armourers, persons expert in mixing cement, perfumers, goldsmiths, shampooers, physicians, helpers in bath, incense-makers, wine-sellers, washermen, tailors, actors with a number of gay women, cooks, fishermen, persons versed in the Vedas, virtuous Brahmanas followed Bharata in carts being attired in their best apparels, daubed in red unguent powder.

After passing a long distance they arrived at Sringeripur on the bank of the Ganges. There Guha, the Nishada chief, was ruling the province with his kinsmen. Then Bharata's army came to the Ganges full of

1 The word is Mayuraka—it may mean, peacock catcher, peacock dancer or worker in peacock-feathers.

chakravakas Bharata asked his men to halt there and he wished to perform *Tarpan* for the spiritual good of his father. After disposing his men Bharata thought of the means by which he would be able to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE MEETING WITH GUHA

Guha seeing a vast number of people and a mighty force collected on the bank of the Ganges said to his kinsmen, "Look, there is a vast sea of troops, indeed I do not see its end. From that huge Kovidara tree in the flag streaming from the chariot, it seems foolish Bharata has come. Perhaps he will first enchain us or kill us first and then will kill exiled Rama. He has intended to kill Rama for securing complete possession of the kingdom. Rama is both my liege and friend. Now clad yourselves in your armours and wait on the bank of the Ganges. Let my strong retainers get themselves ready to throw obstacles at the time of Bharata's crossing the Ganges. Let hundreds of Kaivarta youths accoutred in mail wait in readiness in five hundred boats. If Bharata has no evil design against Rama, his army may safely cross the Ganges."

Having given these directions to his kinsmen, the lord of the Nishadas went to meet Bharata with meat, fish and honey.

Seeing Guha coming to Bharata, Sumantra said, "Look prince! Rama's dear friend Guha is coming with his kinsmen. Let him come to you. This old chief knows everything about the Dandaka forest and he also knows where Rama and Lakshmana are now residing."

Bharata at once agreed to Sumantra's proposal.

Then the Nishada chief cheerfully approached Bharata and addressing him said, "O prince, you may consider this country as your home. You have deceived us not by sending any message beforehand. Now I place all my resources at your disposal, please make yourself comfortable in the house of your servant. The Nishadas have stored wild fruits, fresh and dry meat, and woodland meal, and I pray let the army sup here tonight and set out on the next morning."

Bharata replied, 'My men have been already entertained by your kind wishes, now tell me by what way I shall reach the hermitage of Bharadwaja.'

Then Guha replied in folded palms, "The Nishadas are acquainted with all these places, they will go with you and I shall myself accompany you. Now tell me with what intention you are going to Rama? To tell you the truth, the sight of your vast army has rather filled me with great apprehension towards Rama."

Hearing Guha speaking thus, Bharata replied in sweet words, "Let such time never come when I may commit any mischief to Rama. He is my elder and adorable like my father. I am now repairing to the forest to bring back Rama. I tell you the truth, don't doubt me even for a moment."

The Lord of the Nishada was greatly delighted at these words and said :

"O prince, since you have renounced the kingdom obtained without any effort, all glory be unto you. I don't find anybody like you on earth. Your fame will for ever spread in the three worlds, since you have intended to bring back Rama from miseries."

When they were thus talking, the sun grew dim at the approach of night.

Bharata was greatly pleased with Guba's hospitality and retired to bed with Satrugbna. Anxious thoughts about Rama began to corrode his heart, as fire burns a forest-tree, hidden in its hollow. As the snowy Hima-layas thaw with the heat of the sun, so perspiration bathed his body. He was oppressed by the heavy burden of sorrow, as if he was then seized with mental fever.

Guha tried to console Bharata, and in course of his conversations he spoke about the good qualities of Lakshmana, stating that when he assured Lakshmana about his friendship and love for Rama and offered himself and his men for the protection of Rama at night, Lakshmana thankfully declined his service and undertook the task himself, saying that he had no need of comfort or rest since the best of heroes was lying on the ground with his wife; and when Lakshmana was bitterly lamenting for the misfortune that has befallen Rama and Ayodaya, the night was over; they then matted their locks and crossed the Ganges through his help.

Hearing this Bharata was deeply buried in thoughts, and shortly after he fainted in grief. At this the Nishada chief grew pale and began to shake like a tree in earthquake. Satrugbna, who was close by, began to shed tears by embracing Bharata. Kausalya and other queens then came near Bharata and began to cry aloud.

Kausalya said with tears, "My boy! are you ill? The royal family now depends on you. Rama and Lakshmana have gone to the forest. I have sustained

my life only by seeing you. The king is dead and you are now our protector."

Bharata soon recovered his senses and asked Guha with tearful eyes, "O Nishada chief, do tell me where worshipful Rama passed the night with Sita. Upon which bed they lay? Which food they took?"

Guha then narrated everything and said, "O prince, I procured various kinds of fruits and provisions for Rama, but when I offered them to him, he, accordingly to the Kshatriya custom, instead of accepting the presents returned everything, saying with entreaties, "My friend, it is our duty to give and not to take anything." Then Lakshmana brought water from the Ganges, and after drinking that he fasted with Sita, and Lakshmana drank the remnant left after Rama's drink. Then they said their evening prayers with a devoted heart. After the prayer, Lakshmana gathered Kusha grass and prepared bed for Rama, and when Rama and Janaki lay down, he retired from the place after washing their feet. O prince, this is the Ingudi tree beneath which Rama passed the night with his wife on the grass."

Hearing these words Bharata saw the bed used by Rama near the Ingudi tree, and then addressing his mothers said, "Look, here noble Rama passed his night, lying on the ground. It was certainly not worthy of him who is born of the great king Dasaratha. How can he now lie on the ground who passed his nights on beds furnished with soft skins and excellent cloths? How does he who was in the habit of sleeping in high mansions, in delightfully cool apartments—coloured like pale clouds—with golden floor and silver wall, provided with elegant beds, decked with profusion of

flowers, perfumed with sandal and Aguru, and resonant with notes of the parrots : and who was roused every morning with sweet music, by the jingling sounds of the anklets of female attendants, and by the songs of praise by captives and bards, now lies on the ground ? It is difficult to believe that Rama now lies on the ground. It seems like a dream. It seems nothing is mightier than Fate. Here is the bed that still bears the impress of Rama's limbs for changing his sides on it. Look, how the grass over the hard soil has been crushed by the pressure of his limbs. Sita probably lay on this bed, for here and there are still found scattered grains of gold. Surely at the time of lying down Sita's cloth somehow struck to it, for silken fibres are still attached to it. Husband's bed is always pleasant to the wife, or how could such a delicate lady lie on it ? Ah ! blessed is Lakshmana for following Rama at such juncture. The king is dead, Rama has gone to the forest, and the earth seems to be quite helpless like a boat without a helmsman. From today I shall observe the vow of a forest-life, and shall gladly pass fourteen years in the forest by wearing barks, matted locks, and by living on fruits and roots and sleeping on the ground. Satrugna will live with me and worshipful Rama with Lakshmana rule over Ayodhya. Let him be crowned by the Brahmanas. May my desire be fulfilled through Providential grace."

Bharata passed the night on the bank of the Ganges. In the morning he roused Satrugna from sleep and told him to get ready for the journey. At daybreak, Guha came and enquired about Bharata's welfare. Bharata after answering his questions asked to help him to cross the Ganges with his men.

At this, Guha came back quickly and roused his men in helping Bharata to cross the Ganges. Shortly, his men fetched five hundred boats. Besides these Guha brought a magnificent barg, called Swastika furnished with oars and pinions. Its inside was covered with a pale yellow-coloured blanket worked in gold. And the Nishadas were playing music on its deck. Bharata then got upon the boat with Satrughna. First of all, priests and protectors got upon it, then Kausalya and other queens boarded the boat. At the time of departure the troops set fire to their temporary sheds.

The boats then swiftly reached the other bank of the Ganges. Some ferried women, some horses, some bullocks and some precious cars.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN THE HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJA

In due time Bharata put off his arms and dress, and putting on a piece of silken cloth he went on foot with the counsellors, placing Vasishtha in front of him. Coming near the hermitage, he dismissed his counsellors and entered the asylum after Vasishtha.

On seeing Vasishtha, Bharadwaja rose from his seat and sent his pupils to fetch Arghya. Bharata then bowed to the saint. Seeing Bharata in company of Vasishtha, Bharadwaja understood him to be king Dasaratha's son. Having offered the guests water to wash their feet and fruits to eat, Bharadwaja enquired after the welfare of Ayodhya. He knew that Dasaratha was dead, so he did not ask anything about him. Then Vasishtha questioned Bharadwaja about the welfare of fire, pupils, trees, deer and birds.

After answering all these, he asked Bharata about the cause of his visit and whether he intended any mischief to Rama.

Bharata hearing Bharadwaja's words replied in a voice choked with tears :

"I am undone, if you too, put such questions. No injury will be done to Rama by me. I am not least pleased with the action of my mother. I have come to bring back Rama by paying my homage to his feet. Please banish all your doubts from your heart. Tell me where Rama stoppeth now."

Bharadwaja then joyfully returned, "This is quite worthy of you. Being born in the line of Raghu, control of senses, righteous instincts and serving the superiors are your duties. I knew your intention from before, but I asked you this just for the confirmation of your reputation. I know Rama. He is now living with Lakshmana and Janaki in the Chitrakuta hills. You go there tomorrow, but spend the day in my hermitage."

Bharata then stayed there for Bharadwaja's hospitality and thanked him saying that he had already offered to him what could be procured in the forest. Bharadwaja then wanted to entertain Bharata's army and asked why he had left them behind? Bharata replied, "O saint, it is in fear of you that I could not bring my army along with me. Be he a king or a prince, he should carefully avoid encroaching upon the hermitage of an ascetic. Horses, elephants, and men that have come with me cover a large tract of ground. I have left them behind fearing that they might cause disturbance to the hermitage."

Bharadwaja then asked Bharata to order his army to come to his hermitage. Bharata did as directed.

Bharadwaja then entered the chamber of sacrificial fire, and having rubbed his lips twice with water invoked God Viswakarma for the entertainment of the guests :

"I invoke you, O Viswakarma, expert in all works, for the entertainment of my guests. I also invoke the three rulers of the world, like Indra, for it. Let all the streams that flow towards the west in zig-zag course appear hither. Let some of them run with Maireya liquor, some with refined wines, some with cool waters sweet like sugarcane juice. I invoke all the gods and goddesses, Gandharas, Ghrītachi, Vishachi, Misrakeshi, Alambusha, Nagdatta, Hema and Soma residing in the hills. I also invoke the fairies that go to Indra and lotus-born Brahma to come with Tamvarus. And let the wonderful forest that exists in the north Kuru, whose leaves are ornaments and attires, and whose fruits are beautiful damsels, appear here. Let God Soma give the different kinds of food, meat, wines and other drinks and beautiful garlands."

Maharshi Bharadwaja by virtue of his penance and asceticism employed his voice in uttering the Mantras orthoepically in consonance with Siksha. He then ceased and prayed for the appearance of the deities, facing the west.

Then the gods thus invoked began to appear one by one. Sweet Zephyr began to blow by carrying perfumes from the Malaya and the Dardura Hills, and clouds began to rain flowers. Heavenly music was heard; the Apsaras began to dance and the Gandharvas to sing. Sounds of

Vina were being heard. Sweet music seemed to ascend the sky and penetrate the earth. Troops of Bharata in astonishment surveyed the wonderful deeds of Viswakarma. A square plot of level ground extending five leagues on all sides was covered with lustrous green grass, like blue sapphire, and on it stood Bels, Kapithwas, Jack-fruit trees, Lemons, Amalakis, Mangoes and other trees bent down with fruits. Pleasant Chaitraratha forest was transfigured from the north. There arose white edifices with four sections; stables for horses and elephants; mansions furnished with beds, and seats, various kinds of provisions, garlands, cleansed vessels and apparels. Bharata then entered one of those palaces with counsellors and priests.

At that time twenty thousand women sent by Prajapati, and another twenty thousand sent by Kuvera, adorned with pearls and gems appeared on the scene and created a flutter by their beauty. Then came another twenty thousand damsels from the heavenly Nandana forest. Gandharva king, Narada, Tamvaru and Gopa began to sing before Bharata. Misrakeshi and other heavenly damsels began to dance. Heavenly wreathes and flowers were seen in heaps at Prayaga. The Bel tree played upon Mridanga, Vibhita kept time and Aswattha tree began to dance!¹ Sinsapa, Amalaki, Jamvu trees and Mallika creepers appeared in the forms of women and they began to say, "Those who drink, let them drink; those who are hungry, let them feed sumptuously on well-dressed meat

1 An out and out miracle—quite difficult to understand. It may be a poetical hyperbole for a grand entertainment.

and sweets. Seven or eight women sometimes took a man on the bank of the river, helped him in bath, some shampooed his limbs and some offered him drink. Thus Bharata's hosts were entertained, and each one enjoyed to his heart's content. Nobody had any dirty linen on him but each one was dressed in clean white clothes. Nobody looked sad or dirty but each one was bright and joyous, and every one gazed in wonder at gold and silver dishes decorated with flowers and filled with clean white rice. Those vessels contained fruit-juice, flavoured soups, curries and meat of goats and boars. Wells were filled with Payasha and the trees began to distil honey. Tanks were filled with wines and smoking venisons, meat of deer, cocks, peacocks were kept in heaps. Vessels for rice, curries, and hundred thousands golden washing bowls were kept there. Pitchers were filled with curds. Tanks were filled with butter, milk and sugar. Bathing tubs contained scented astringent powders, scented grass, like Kalka, and other articles of bath were deposited there. Sticks for cleansing teeth, sandal-paste, bright mirrors, sandals, combs, brushes, collyrium-pots, umbrellas, bows, mails, beds, seats, and drinking troughs for horses, elephants and asses were all kept in readiness. The whole thing appeared like a wonderful dream, and every one was deeply astonished at this, and Bharata's troops passed their time like gods in the Nandana. The soldiers soon became intoxicated with wine, and garlands of flowers lay scattered, trampled and crushed. Bharata was greatly pleased with the hermit's hospitality, and being desirous of meeting Rama appeared before Bharadwaja. Bharadwaja asked whether he had a pleasant night and whether his

troops were satisfied or not. Bharata said that he and his people were more than satisfied and asked how far from there lay the hermitage of virtuous Rama ?

Bharadwaja said, "About five miles from this place there is a hill called the Chitrakuta situated in a deep forest. Its woods and streams are quite pleasant. The river Bhagirathi flows by the north of this mountain. Your brother is living there by erecting a thatched hut. Proceed some distance along the southern bank of the Jamuna and then turn to your left and if you proceed along it you will find Rama."

Hearing this, Kausalya and Sumitra bowed to the saint's feet and Kaikeyi, despised by all and overwhelmed with shame, after bowing to the saint stood at some distance, with a sad mien near Bharata. Bharadwaja then wanted to know fully about his mothers. Bharata replied :

"Whom you find emaciated with fast and sorrows is my father's queen—the mother of Rama ; and she who stands with a dejected look like a branch of withered Karnika flowers is Sumitra. Heroic Lakshmana and Satrugna are her sons. And there stands dishonourable¹ Kaikeyi, for whom Rama and Lakshmana have been banished into the forest and who is the cause of king Dasaratha's death. Though she looks honourable in appearance, she is foolish, proud, irritable and cruel. This sinful woman is my mother. My misfortunes have been brought by her."

1 Arya—means honourable. Anarya—dishonourable. Thus how, in course of time, the distinction between the conquerors and the conquered came to be expressed.

Thus saying, Bharata began to heave deep sighs with red hot eyes like a panting serpent.

Then noble Bharadwaja said, "Don't blame your mother. This exile of Rama will surely produce good at the end to all."

Then Bharata after taking leave of Bharadwaja asked his men to get ready for their departure. At his orders the vast army was at once on its move and it proceeded along the western bank of the Ganges, by startling beasts and birds of the forest by fright. And the wild animals stampeded in fear in different directions. Thus they covered a great distance.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE FOREST-LIFE

Bharata then nearing the Chitrakuta said, "From what I have heard it seems that we have arrived at the place spoken by Bharadwaja. This is the Chitrakuta and the Mandakini flows at its feet. There stretches deep forest, dense like clouds far and wide, and its peaks are now being trampled by my huge elephants. Trees standing over them are shedding their flowers like clouds pouring gentle rains. Look Satrugna, these tracts belong to the Kinnaras; and deer, like autumnal clouds, are bounding in the air. The soldiers bearing shields have decked their heads with flowers like Southernns! Dusts raised by the hoofs of horses have darkened the sky, but for my benefit the wind is fast clearing them away. This terrible forest, devoid of human beings, today appears to me like populous Ayodhya! Let my army now retire and make search for Rama and Lakshmana."

Bharata's men on entering the forest found a column of smoke rising from the woods. Thereupon they came to Bharata and said, "It is impossible to find fire where there is no human habitation, so we assure you that Rama and Lakshmana now reside in this forest, or some ascetics like Rama." Bharata then asked them to observe silence and wait there. Bharata then proceeded towards the rising smoke taking Sumantra and Dhriti with him.

At that time, Rama who had been residing at the Chitrakuta for some time, said to Janaki to cheer her up, "Janaki! at the sight of these beautiful hills I don't so much feel for the loss of kingdom, nor so keenly for the separation from friends. How beautiful are the hills, the resort of wild birds all round the year, how high are its cliffs as if piercing the blue sky, how rich with minerals, for which the hills appear richly variegated in colours, some parts look silvery white, some purple, some look yellow like Manjistha, some blue like sapphire, some glittering like crystals, and some like Ketaki blossoms, and somewhere starlike lustre of mercury is seen. How tigers, bears and innocent deer roam about the forest. How it abounds in magnificent trees. Kinnara pairs live happily in these valleys. Close is the sporting ground of the Vidyadharis. Excellent clothes and arms hang from the branches of the trees. Here is a waterfall, there is a rivulent, there is a fountain, and the mountain looks like an elephant emitting temporal sweat. Sweet breeze delights all by wafting fragrance of flowers from the caves. Janaki, if I live with you and Lakshmana even for a long time in this forest, sorrow will never overtake me in any way.

I feel great delight in this beautiful hill abounding in fruits and flowers and in tuneful birds. Don't you feel happy at these sights, pleasing to the body, mind and speech? My forefathers have assigned forest-life as best suited for the attainment of salvation,—the only balm for all worldly sorrows and anxieties after death. Look, how vast crags of the various hues are scattered all round, some parts of the mountain appear like pretty gardens, and some like houses even. At night, the minerals¹ glow with their own energy (lustre), like flames of fire. These are the beds (haunts) of pleasure-seeking people, they have been made with coverlets of Sthagaras, Punnagas, Birch leaves and lotus-petals. Look, how they partook of fruits, how scattered lie the crushed garlands of lotuses. It seems that Chitrakuta has risen high by penetrating the earth. Its peaks are highly beautiful and they surpass in beauty Vamvan-kasava, Kuvera's city, and the city of Indra and north Kuru. If I pass these fourteen years with you and Lakshmana by following righteous path, then I shall surely obtain happiness for observing the custom and duties of my race."

Then lotus-eyed Rama emerging from the Chitrakuta addressing Janaki of moon-like face said, "My darling, here flows the Mandakini. Its banks are most beautiful. Swans and cranes always croak on them, and various fruits-bearing and flowery trees stand on them. Its descent is really beautiful. Look, how the thirsty deer drinks its muddy water near the bank. Look, the

¹ Oshadhi—it means annual plants but here it is doubtful whether the word signifies them or it means medicinal herbs or gems and minerals.

ascetics with matted locks and bathing in the river and anchorites with raised hands are worshipping the sun. The tops and branches of the trees, crowned with fruits and flowers, are swaying in the wind. It seems as if the hill itself is in dance. Look, how hosts of flowers being moved by the breeze are kissing the crystal stream of the Mandakini. The sight of the Chitrakuta and the Mandakini appears much more delightful than city-life. Virtuous saints daily bathe in this stream, so bathe with me as my companion and gather red and white lotuses from there. Just consider the hill to be Ayodhya and the Mandakini as the Saraju. Virtuous Lakshmana is obedient to me, and you are also favourably disposed towards me. So I feel myself immensely happy. Bathing thrice in this river and living on wild fruits and roots and drinking honey in your company, I do not even crave for the kingdom of Ayodhya."

Saying this, Rama began to walk with Janaki over the Chitrakuta, blue as the collyrium dye.

Thus Rama showed to Janaki wild woodland scenery, and as they turned towards their cottage, Rama found a beautiful cave in the slope of the mountain, in a shadowy recluse. Its floor was strewn with minerals and paved with stones. It was situated in a shadowy vale where the trees were bent down with blossoms and fruits and gay birds sang all the time.

Rama gazed with wonder and pointing the cave to Sita, said

"O Vaidehi! do you like that beautiful place? Then let us rest here for a while. Look at that block of stone, so square, so smooth as if it was set for you.

Look, how yonder flowery shrub, like a *kesara* tree, overshadows your head."

Then Janaki, in soft and tender accent, that betrayed her love, said :

"O flower of Raghu's line, my pleasure is to do thy will. It is enough for me to know your wish. You have indeed wandered long."

Thus saying in gentle tone, obedient Sita of spotless beauty and graceful limbs, went to the stone. But immediately Rama turned to his spouse and exclaimed :

"Look Sita, this flowery vale seems to be the pleasure haunt of sylvan gods and goddesses. Look, how the pines torn by the tusks of elephants distil their gums : how the whole forest has grown resonant with the sweet notes of the cuckoo, Bhringaraj and other melodious singers of the wood. Look, how the creeper has twined delicate tendrils round the blossoming mango tree, so you throw your arms round me when there is none nearby."

Thus saying Rama embraced his spouse, and loving Sita—beautiful as the Goddess of wealth and beauty—reclined on her husband's arms, and a mighty thrill of joy ran through his frame.

Rama in loving cares dubbed his finger in vermilion-like soft mineral dye of the rock and put a lovely circular mark on Sita's brow which seemed to gleam as the morning sun, whereupon Sita looked like the beautiful goddess of dawn.

Rama then overflowing with joy plucked some blossoms from the *kesara* tree and with them he decked the lovely tresses of Sita.

Thus after resting a while on the rocky ledge, Rama

proceeded with Maitheli towards a pleasant shade where various kinds of creatures were straying about. Sita finding a monkey coming near her clung to Rama in fear and her royal consort soothed her by lacing his mighty arm round her slender waist, and scared away the ape ; and from that close embrace the red gleaming mark on Sita's brow was printed on Rama's expanded chest. And when the monkey fled away, Sita seeing that red mark stamped on Rama's chest gleefully burst forth in a ring of laughter. Then seeing at a distance a bunch of bright Asoka flowers shaking in the breeze, as if the tree was in flames, Sita fondly said, "O pride of Raghu's line, let us bend our steps thither where the red Asoka blooms."

As divine Siva with his holy consort Uma roams through the vast regions of the Himalayas, so Rama strayed about with Sita in that delightful forest, and the happy pair sported themselves to their hearts' content and in their delightful sports each one put a crown of flowers upon the other's head.

Then, after strolling the green woods, surveying the lovely spots there, they returned to their snug cottage where every thing was kept tidy and quite handy by Lakshmana out of deep brotherly love. Lakshmana hurried to meet them in the way, showed Rama the day's hunt—the ten black deer killed by poisoned darts, and their well-dressed meat. Rama was greatly pleased at this and addressing Sita said, "Look my darling, this venison is fresh and sweet to the taste, and it has been well-roasted too, now supply us with your gifts "

Sita then cheerfully spread the woodland meal and honey before the brothers. After Rama and Lakshmana

finished their meals and washed their mouths, Janaki took her own repast.

The remaining venison was set apart for being dried, and Rama told Sita to scare away the crows from it. But Rama, to his great amusement, found Sita much distressed by a bold crow. No sooner it was scared away, it again greedily came near the meat. Sita chased the crow again and again, but all in vain, it rather threatened to strike her with its beak, wings and claws. Rama laughed finding Sita thus annoyed by the crow, and her cheeks were glowing with rage, her lips quivering in anger, and frowns darkening her lovely brow.

Rama rebuked the bird for its impudence, but apparently it paid no heed to Rama's words, but flew again at Sita. At this, Rama fixed an arrow with mantras to his bow and aimed at the crow. The bird sprang upon its wings, but the magic shaft followed wherever it flew. The crow then flew back to Rama and fell at his feet and pleaded for its life.

Rama hearing the bird entreating for its life said, "Finding Sita much distressed I took her side and set this arrow with mantras to take your life, but since you ask for forgiveness and to spare your life, I shall grant thy prayer—I must protect the suppliant. But my shaft is never discharged in vain, so give up some part of your body in exchange of your life."

Thinking that it was better to live than to die, the crow yielded an eye and the arrow at once struck the crow in the eye. Sita in deep amazement stared at this. The bird then flew away where it liked.

Thus being refreshed, Rama pointed to Sita the lovely rill running beneath the hill.

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Meanwhile Bharata's army drew near. Rama saw a cloud of dust raised by a marching army, and heard a deafening uproar and finding the wild animals running to and fro, he said, "Hark Lakshmana, a terrific noise like the rumbling of a thunder-cloud is being heard in the woods, and deer, elephants, buffaloes and lions are scampering away in fear. Just ascertain its cause. Has any king or prince come hither for hunting? Or it is due to the ravages of some ferocious animal? Quickly ascertain the cause."

Thereupon, Lakshmana soon climbed upon a flowery Sal tree and began to survey all round.

Lakshmana, at last, saw a vast army marching towards the east, and addressing Rama said, "O worshipful lord, please put out the fire now and enter the cave with Janaki. Now put on your armour and get yourself ready by fixing string to your bow and have the arrows near at hand."

Rama said, "First try to ascertain to whom belongs this host."

Then Lakshmana answered flaming with rage, "My lord, Kaikeyi's son, Bharata, in order to remove all thorns from his side, has come to kill us. The Kovidara flag of the chariot is visible behind the yonder big tree. People are merrily marching towards us. Either let us take shelter in the mountain, or wait here with bows in our hands. Today I shall see Bharata, the root cause of our sufferings and for whom you have lost your throne. He is our enemy and he deserves to be killed. It will not be sinful to kill him who first injures. I shall kill this Bharata and then you will rule over the earth. Greedy Kaikeyi will today find her son slain at

my hands, like a tree riven by the elephant's tusk. To-day, I shall kill even Kaikeyi with Manthara. I shall cast my anger on the army, as people set fire to woods. I shall pay off the debt to my bow and arrows by killing Bharata today."

Rama finding Lakshmana thus angry addressed him in pacifying words, "When mighty Bharata has himself come, what is the use of bows and arrows? I have vowed to observe my father's pledge, then what shall I gain by killing Bharata? What is kingdom to me? Whatever can be acquired by the destruction of friends, relations and of near and dear ones, is like a poisoned food to me which I will never partake. And I swear to you, that religious merit, wealth, objects of desire and earthly possessions that I may want are for you all, and I swear by my sword, that if I wish for the kingdom, it is for the happiness and maintenance of my brothers. Lakshmana, it is not difficult for me even to possess this sea-girdled earth, but I do not crave even for Indra's state by unrighteous means. What more? If I wish for any happiness depriving you all, may fire reduce that to ashes then and there. It seems, dear Bharata after returning from his maternal uncle's house to Ayodhya has been greatly mortified at the news of our exile, so he has come here to see us just out of deep love. Don't ascribe any other motive to his presence here. He does not wish us any harm even in his thoughts. Lakshmana, why are you apprehensive about him? Never utter any harsh expression against him. If you speak anything rude against Bharata, it will in fact be against me. I know not how even in times of peril the son can slay his father, or a brother his brother as dear as one's

own life. If you have said all these for kingdom, then I shall ask Bharata in his presence to confer the kingdom on you. He will never disagree to my word, if I say this."

When virtuous Rama said this, Lakshmana was overwhelmed with shame, and with diffidence said, "Perhaps father has come to see you."

Rama too finding Lakshmana confounded with shame said :

"So it seems and he has come to take us back, for he knows that we, who are accustomed to pass our days in ease and luxury, are now suffering from the hardships of forest-life. But why I do not see his white royal umbrella? It feels my heart with great misgivings. Now get down from the tree."

In the meantime, in order to avoid all disturbance, Bharata asked his army to take their quarters at different places of the hill.

Then Bharata asked Satrughna to look for Rama and Lakshmana with Guha and others, and he would walk on foot with priests and counsellors and that his mind would know no rest or peace till he found out Rama.

Bharata then walked through the flowery woods and then climbing up a Sal tree he found smoke rising out of Rama's cottage. At the sight of smoke Bharata concluded that Rama must have been living there and was overwhelmed with delight at this thought. It seemed to him as if he had crossed a turbulent sea. He then proceeded with Guha towards the asylum of Rama. At the time of setting out, Bharata said to Vasishtha to fetch his mothers without delay. Bharata then proceeded

with Satrugna in hurried steps being eager to meet Rama. Sumantra who too was pining for Rama followed Satrugna,

After proceeding some distance Bharata saw a cottage of leaves like the hermitage of a monk. He found fuels and flowers in front of the cottage, and heaps of dry dung of deer and buffaloes kept for the prevention of cold.

Bharata then cheerfully pointed out to Satrugna, "We have arrived at the place indicated by Bharadwaja, perhaps the Mandakini is close by. I find barks suspended from the trees, and it seems to me that they have been set up by Lakshmana to mark the path as he has to leave the cottage sometimes at unusual hours. There rises dense smoke of fire which the anchorites carefully preserve in the forest. I shall soon get sight of saintly Rama devoted to his superiors."

Bharata then reaching the bank of the Mandakini said, "Cursed is my life, worshipful Rama is passing his days in meditation and yoga. He has been suffering all these for me. I won't be able to bear this odium. I shall throw myself at his feet and shall also entreat Janaki and Lakshmana by holding their feet."

When Bharata was thus regretting, he saw from a distance the beautiful sacred cottage of Rama, covered with the leaves of Sala, palms and Ashwakarna. He found there the formidable bow plated with gold, like the famous one of Indra, the accomplisher of mighty deeds and bringer of death to the enemies. As the nether region looks resplendent with snakes, the quiver was full of sharp arrows flaming as the sun. There

were swords in golden sheathes, shields and gloves¹ spangled with gold. There stood a spacious altar and fire was burning to its north-east. Bharata saw all these and at last found lotus-eyed and fire-like effulgent Rama seated on a skin like God Sayambhu, with Sita and Lakshmana in the cottage. He was clad in bark and a black deer-skin and wore matted locks on his head.

Bharata thus seeing the ruler of the earth broke forth in grief, "Alas, who was attended by the courtiers is now surrounded by herds of wild deer ! He is now clad in bare skin who used to wear costly apparels ! Who was decorated with beautiful garlands is now wearing matted locks on his head ! The body that was besmeared with precious sandal is now stained with dirt !

"He who used to perform great sacrifices with what great hardships is now observing religious rites ! Alas ! he is suffering all these for me. Shame upon my hateful self."

Saying this, Bharata approached Rama with a perspiring body, and before he came to close quarters he fell down on the ground being blinded with tears. As he fell down he exclaimed :

"O Arya !" But his voice was choked. He silently stared at Rama. He again attempted to speak but could not. As he uttered "Arya" his voice was again choked.

Then Satrugna with tearful eyes adored the feet of Rama. Rama embraced him and began to shed tears. As the sun and the moon meet Sukra (Venus), and Vrihaspati (Jupiter) in the sky, so Rama and Lakshmana met Sumantra and Guha. The denizens of the forest began to shed tears at the sight of these four princes.

¹ Finger protector—the word is Angulitran in the original.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MEETING WITH RAMA

Here Bharata was lying prostrate on the ground with folded palms. His face was dark with sorrow, his locks were matted, and he was clad in bark and was incapable of being gazed upon like the doomsday-sun. When Rama recognised the great hero, he embraced him and took him on his lap. Rama then questioned him with great care :

"My boy ! where is father now ? You shouldn't have come here while he is alive. I meet you after a long time since your stay in your maternal uncle's house. Now, tell me why have you come to this deep jungle ? Is father alive, or has he gone to the other world being afflicted with sorrow for my separation ? You are still a boy, has the kingdom been wrested from your hands ? Dost thou not minister to the wishes of our father ? Is our righteous father—the performer of Rajasuya and the Ashwamedha sacrifices—in good health ? Does our family-priest Vasishtha receive due honours ?

"Are queen Kausalya and Sumitra doing well ? Is not worshipful Kaikeyi passing her days in happiness ? Does not noble Sujajna conversant with rituals perform your ceremonies ? Do not intelligent people look after the sacrificial fire ? Do they not inform you in due time about the sacrifice ? Don't you show proper respect to the deities, father, father-like preceptors, the old, the physicians and to your employees ? Do you slight preceptor Sudhanva who is versed in polity and in the use of weapons, employed both with mantras and without ? Have you engaged high-born, valiant, wise, and self-controlled persons as your counsellors who can

like you read the import of signs ? If counsel is well-kept by wise counsellors, then success attends in everything. I hope, you are not subject to sleep, and you rise in proper hour, and decide about the means of attaining your objects towards the end of night. I think you consult yourself and others in your actions and keep your decisions always secret, and always quickly perform things that can be easily done and which are conducive to public weal. The frontier chiefs no doubt know what you have accomplished or what is about to be completed, but they do not know what remains to be done. They cannot even guess or infer by reasoning what you and your counsellors wish to keep secret. Dost thou not wish for a single wise man instead of thousands of fools ? In times of financial difficulties, wise people help us in every way, but if the king be surrounded by hundreds or thousands of fools, he cannot depend upon a single person. In short, even a single capable minister may secure immense prosperity to the king. My boy, don't you appoint best men to the highest offices, mediocres in middling situations, and low class people for low work ?

"Don't you entrust most responsible works to ministers who are men of character, above bribery and have been holding the office through hereditary succession (from father to son) ? Do people even when severely punished show any disrespect towards you ? Do the priests scorn you, as women hate lustful people who use force against them ? He, who does not put an end to an unfaithful servant clever in polity, or a valiant warrior covetous of riches, is himself ruined in turn. Do you not follow this policy ? Don't you appoint an

intelligent, high-born and a devoted warrior as your General? Don't you honour those men of rank who are well-versed in militarism and have given proofs of their prowess before the public? Don't you pay your army regularly and provide them with their rations in due time? Do you make any delay in this? If salaries and rations are not given in proper time, the employees get annoyed with their master, and then all sorts of troubles¹ follow. Are the chiefs of the clans devoted to you? Are they prepared even to die for you? Do you employ educated citizens, possessed with presence of mind and boldness of speech, as your emissaries? Have you gathered informations through spies about eighteen² expedients of others and fifteen of your own? Do you slight the enemy who comes again, though driven off before?

"I think, you do not concern yourself with atheistic Brahmanas. All those puerile persons proud of their learning can only bring evil to others, and in spite of the existence of excellent religious literature, they vainly engage themselves in barren sophistical arguments. Are

1 A sound piece of military administration. Hunger, they say, is the mother of socialism.

2 The following are the persons alluded to here :—

(1) Minister. (2) Priest. (3) Heir-apparent. (4) General. (5) Warders. (6) Superintendent of Jail. (7) Treasurer. (8) Conveyors of Royal commands. (9) Interrogators of law called Pradvivaka, i.e., pleaders. (10) Judges. (11) Jury—deciders of customs etc. (12) Paymaster of salaries. (13) Distributor of pensions after service. (14) City-Administrators. (15) Rangers of forests. (16) Magistrate. (17) Justice of the peace and (18) Chieftains of forts. Fifteen excepting the first three, includes the rest. Mr. Griffith has omitted this Chapter altogether.

you not defending Ayodhya—the land of our ancestors provided with strong city-gates, and full of beautiful palaces, inhabited by the noble and energetic Aryan people, and where there is plenty of elephants, horses, tanks, temples, chaityas, jewels, and corns, whose border lands are well-cultivated, and where there is good society, where men and women are happy and gay, and where festivities are always held, where there is no room for malice or wickedness, and where there is no ferocious animal, where cultivation is carried with waters of the river? Is not that wealthy province free from all disturbing elements? Do not cultivators and breeders enjoy your favour? Do not the people follow their vocations and live in happiness? Do you not maintain them by preventing their evils and doing good to them? It is your duty to protect all who are living under your jurisdiction. My boy, are the women-folk safe through your care? Don't you honour them? Do you confide any secret to them? What interest do you take in the collection of animals? There are many forests in the kingdom full of elephants. Don't you look after them? Don't you rear mares and female-elephants? Don't you enter the court in royal robes? Don't you travel along the streets even rising early in the morning? Do the servants approach you fearlessly or they keep themselves away? You see, a middle course between too much familiarity and inaccessibility is good. Are the forts well-provided with wealth, corns, water, arms, machines, artizans and soldiers? Is not your income greater than your expenditure? Do you give anything to the undeserving? Are you not open-handed in the worship of deities, in the performance of rites to the

deceased ancestors, in the services of guests, Brahmanas, warriors, and friends ? Do you punish from covetousness a good man accused of a crime without having him tried first and without finding him guilty by a competent judge versed in the Shastras ? Do you set free from motives of gain a thief arrested with stolen property and confronted with interrogatories ? Do not your counsellors impartially judge between parties whether rich or poor, when they are involved in disputes ? When false cases are not justly tried i. e., when there is a failure of justice, the tears of the innocent bring about the ruin of the princes. Haven't you won over children, the aged, the physicians and important persons by liberal gifts ? Do you oppose righteousness for gain or for the gratification of your senses ? Have you eschewed atheism, untruthfulness, inattention, anger, procrastination, evil company, idleness, gratification of the senses, consultation with one person about the kingdom, consultation with wicked persons, divulgence of plans, non-performance of an action already decided upon, non-commencement of work in the morning and setting out all enemies at one and the same time—all these fourteen evils ? Have you understood the value and consequence of the Ten vargas (things),¹ five

The attention of the reader is invited here, this will give him an idea of the administration of that time, also of its material prosperity.

1 Ten vargas :—(1) Hunting, (2) Gambling, (3) Sleeping in the day, (4) Vilifying, (5) Addiction to women (6) to wine, (7) to dancing, (8) to singing, (9) to playing upon musical instruments, (10) And purposeless rambling.

vargas,¹ four vargas,² seven,³ eight vargas,⁴ and three vargas.⁵ Have you mastered the three⁶ and learnt the art of polity? Have you attained victory over the senses and over evils both superhuman and committed by men?

"Have you attained six virtues? (a) Do you perform what is to be done by a king? (b) Do you pay attention to (c) twenty Vargas, to (d) Prikriti, to (e) Mandala, (f) Jatra, (g) Punishment and (h) the two yonis—Peace and war?

"Don't you perform the rites enjoined by the Vedas? Don't you find them to fructify? Are all the wives barren? I hope your learning has not been in vain. Do you act in the manner I have just now spoken to

1 Five kinds of fortresses :—Jala Durga (water fort). Giri Durga (hill fortress). Venu Durga (forest). Harin Durga (fortress full of corns and deer (cattle), and Dhanwan Durga (fortress inaccessible in summer).

2 Four kinds of administrative policy by which to govern the kingdom :—(1) Equity. (2) Liberality. (3) Difference (Divide and rule) and (4) Punishment.

3 Seven indispensable factors of administration :—(1) Sovereign, (2) Ministers, (3) Polity, (4) Fortress, (5) Treasury, (6) Power, (7) Friends.

4 Agriculture, commerce, fortress, bridges, capture of elephants, mines, ores, revenue. Some say eight kinds of manifestations of anger as frowning, etc.

5 (1) Interest (2) Desire and (3) Virtue.

6 The Vedas—At first the Atharva Veda was not included in the division of the Vedas.

(a) (1) Peace, (2) War, (3) Marching and halting, (4) Seeking peace, (5) Sowing dissensions, (6) and Seeking protection.

(b) As to rescue the frightened from the cause of fear, to protect the honourable from insult, etc.

you ? These are conducive to longevity, fame, wealth and virtue. You are no doubt following the examples of our forefathers. I presume, you do not alone enjoy all the dainties yourself, but distribute them among friends who wish for them. Now, mark, my darling, the king, the chastiser of people, can enjoy the earth, yet he can also attain heaven after death by justly governing the people."

After giving such advices in the forms of questions to Bharata Rama asked, "Now tell me why have you come to the forest leaving the kingdom wearing matted lock and deer-skin ? Tell me everything unreservedly, I am anxious to hear them."

(c) Twenty classes of people with whom friendship or peace should not be contracted, viz. :—Children ; invalids ; old people ; one who has been excommunicated by his kinsmen ; cowards ; ferocious persons ; the greedy ; the irritable ; a man with too many advisers ; one with too many foes ; the unrighteous ; too much wordly persons ; one smitten by Providence ; slanderer of gods and Brahmanas ; almost a dead person etc.

(d) Prikritis were five in number :—(1) Ministers, (2) Treasure, (3) Territory, (4) Fortress, (5) Chastisement.

(e) Twelve classes of chiefs capable of declaring war, concluding peace and of observing neutrality.

(f) Fivefold marching (Manoeuvres) of the army at the time of battle.

(g) Administration of criminal justice.

(h) Yonis—sources—here the expression means peace and war.

CHAPTER XL

BHARATA'S REPLY

Bharata somehow subduing his grief said with joined hands :

"O Arya, father after performing a terrible thing at the instigation of Kaikeyi has died of grief for his son. To speak the truth, this sinful act has been committed by mother, and instead of getting the kingdom she has obtained widowhood, and has been condemned to eternal perdition. O worshipful one, I am your servant, be pleased with me and enjoy your kingdom like Indra—the king of Gods. People and widowed mothers have come to you, please do them favour. You are the eldest, and you are to be invested with the crown, so according to custom and morality you should take back your kingdom and thus fulfil the desire of your friends and kinsmen. Let earth cease to be a widow by getting back you as her lord. With my counsellors I entreat you by your feet. I am your brother, pupil and servant, be pleased with me. These ministers hold their offices from generation to generation according to the law of heredity ; they had never been slighted, so it behoves you not to override their wishes."

Saying this Bharata fell at Rama's feet with tearful eyes.

Then Rama embracing Bharata said, "How can a man true to his vows and born of a noble line, do a sinful act just for a kingdom? You are not to be blamed for my exile, and do not also blame your mother through ignorance. Superiors can act as they like in relation to their sons and wives ; sons and disciples should always be obedient. The king has enough

authority either to send me to exile or to confer the kingdom on me. Mother is as worshipful as the father, and when they have sent me to the forest, how can I act otherwise? Go back to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom and I shall live here in the Dandaka forest. This is the wish of the king, now it is your duty to obey that; you should go back and enjoy what has been assigned to you. What has been ordained by that Indra-like noble lord is certainly for my good. The kingdom does not appear covetable to me."

Bharata replied, "O noble one, I have already violated morality and custom, then what do I care for the duties of a king? It is an immemorial custom in our family that the younger should not ascend the throne in presence of the elder. So come back with me to Ayodhya and ascend the throne for the benefit of our race. The king whose acts are righteous, though people may regard him as a human being, to me he is a god. When I was in Kekaya and you were in the forest, father shuffled off his mortal coil. As soon as you set out with Janaki and Lakshmana from Ayodhya, father died of intense grief. Now please get up and perform his last rites. I have already performed them. You were the most favourite of father, may the things offered by you reach the eternal region of Pitriloka. Alas, the king greatly pined for your sight and he died of grief for your separation." Hearing these shocking words—terrible as thunderbolt—Rama fell prostrate stretching his arms on the ground, like a flowery tree fallen down by an axe.

Then his brother and Janaki finding Rama lying like an elephant fatigued with the sports of upturning the

earth with its tusks began to sprinkle water with tearful eyes to restore his consciousness.¹

Slowly Rama regained his consciousness. He then began to shed tears and mournfully said to Bharata :

"Father has gone to the heaven, what shall I do by returning to Ayodhya ? Who will govern the city widowed by the death of the king ? I am indeed born unfortunate, I could not be of any service to my father. I could not perform his funeral rites who gave up his life for me. Bharata and Satrughna, you are fortunate, you have performed the last rites of our father. Even after the expiry of the period of exile I shall not return to lordless Ayodhya. Father is dead, who will now advise me as to what is right and what is wrong ? From whom I shall now hear those sweet words of encouragement which I used to hear when I succeeded in performing a thing successfully ?"

Rama then approached full-moon-like Sita with tearful eyes and addressing her said with a grief-stricken heart, "O Sita, your father-in-law is dead, O Lakshmana, you have become fatherless. Brother Bharata has brought this cruel news."

On hearing of father-in-law's death Sita's eyes grew dim with tears, and for that she could not see her beloved Rama. Rama after consoling Sita said to Lakshmana :

"My boy, bring me Ingudi fruits, and a new bark. I shall now go to the Mandakini and perform the watery

¹ The preceding speech of Rama seems to be an interpolation, for as soon as Rama heard of the death he fainted in grief and Sita too began to shed bitter tears. This chapter has been omitted by Mr. Griffith—Translator.

rites of my father. Let Sita proceed first, you go after her, and I shall follow you. At the time of mourning this is how one should proceed according to the Shastras."¹

Then ever-serviceable Sumantra took Rama by the hand to the bank of the Mandakini consoling him all the way. Bharata and others also arrived there. Rama then facing the south and taking water in the cavity of his joined palms said with tearful eyes, "Father, you have now repaired to heaven, may this clear water offered by me produce your satisfaction there."

Then Rama with his brothers came to the margin of the Mandakini and placing the Pindas of Ingudi mixed up with Jujube fruits on a bed of grass, said with tears, "Father, accept this Pinda and partake of it. We are now residing in the forest and we live upon such food, and what one partakes, he can offer it to the manes of his ancestors."

Rama then left the bank of the river and following the same route by which he previously came, he ascended the hill, and arriving at the door of his cottage, he took Bharata and Lakshmana by the two hands. At that time their grief for their father seemed to be renewed and they began to cry aloud, resounding the hill with their cries like the muffled roars of a lion. At this Bharata's party grew alert and thought that probably Bharata had met Rama and they were now crying for their dead father. Then they ran towards the direc-

1 The order of procession was the youngest went first and the eldest last : and first children, then women, and then men.

tion of the sound and the whole forest shook with their hurried steps.

On arriving at the cottage, the followers of Bharata found sinless Rama seated on the ground. At that sight their eyes were filled with tears and started abusing Kaikeyi and Manthara. Rama stood up at their sight and embraced them affectionately and they bowed at his feet. They then burst into loud lamentations, and every one considered Rama so recently exiled as his dear one for ever residing in a foreign land.

In the meantime Vasishtha was coming along with the queens. The queens were slowly proceeding on foot along the bank of the river, and on seeing a bank's descent (ghat) built for the use of Rama and Lakshmana, to get into the Mandakini stream, Kausalya broke forth in tearful eyes. Pointing the same to Sumitra, and other co-wives she said, "Look Sumitra, this is the bank's descent of those unfortunate who have been deprived of their kingdom. Your son Lakshmana unknown to laziness personally carries water for Rama along these flights. It is a menial work, but it does not degrade, since he does it for his elder, yet this toilsome work is unworthy of him."

Seeing the Ingudi Pindas on grass, Kausalya said, "Look, Rama has offered here Pindas to the noble lord of the Ikshwaku line. What a poor offering to the lord of the earth who used to enjoy all the dainties of the world? How will he feed upon Ingudi fruits? Nothing can be more painful than this. But I wonder why my heart was not rent into two at this painful sight?"

Other queens with great difficulty consoled Kausalya,

but when they saw Rama in the forest like an angel dropped from the heaven, they broke forth in loud sobs.

Rama immediately stood up at their sight and bowed at their feet. They then with their soft palms began to brush off the dusts from his back. Lakshmana then greeted them with a sorrowful heart. They treated Lakshmana as they had done with Rama. At last, Janaki, grown lean with the hardships of forest-life, touched the feet of her mothers-in-law, stood silent with tearful eyes. At that sight Kausalya burst into tears and embracing her as her own daughter exclaimed in grief :

"Alas, how is she, who is the daughter of the king of Videha, daughter-in-law of king Dasaratha, and wife of Rama, bearing these hardships in the forest ? My daughter, the sight of your face which now looks like a withered lily, like a crushed lotus, like gold covered with dusts and like the moon hidden in the clouds, scorches my heart as fire burns a log of wood."

Then Rama bowed to fire-like effulgent Vasishtha, as Indra does to Vrihaspati, and sat down after the latter took his seat. After this Bharata, his ministers, captains and priests sat behind them with folded palms. Every one burnt with curiosity to hear what Vasishtha would speak to Rama.

The night however, passed in their lamentations for their father, and when the day dawned they went to the Mandakini, and performed their morning services there (Homa and recitation of the Sabitri Mantras) and after that they silently came back to Rama.

CHAPTER XLI

THE PERSUASIONS

Bharata then addressing Rama, said before all :

"My lord, the kingdom by bestowing which on me, father wanted to pacify my mother, I do now make over to your hands. Enjoy the kingdom free from all thorns. Who, excepting you can now protect the kingdom torn asunder like a dam breached by strong currents of water during the rains? As the mule cannot imitate a horse, or a common fowl, the king of birds, so you should know me (to be the same) in comparison with you. Happy is the man upon whom depend others for their sustenance, but unhappy is he who depends on others for his own support. Let all people witness you duly established on the throne."

Every one praised Bharata for his noble words.

Then gentle Rama replied, "My boy, a created being does not enjoy any independent existence, he has no freedom of will, he can't act as he likes, he is subject to death. Everything is perishable, every rise has its fall, where there is composition, there is decomposition, there is life as well as death.¹ As a ripe fruit has on other course² but to fall, as an edifice standing on massive pillars grows weak when dilapidated with age, so a man grows feeble and the night that hath passed away will not return back, as the stream of the Jamuna flowing towards the ocean does not recede in its course. As summer's heat continually dries up the

1 In the original Death draws him both here and after.

2 When literally translated it stands thus :—As a ripe fruit has no other fear than fall, so a man who is born has no other fear than death.

water of a tank, so ever-fleeting days and nights rob people of their longevity. Whether you be stationary in one place or roam about hither and thither, your life must run to its end. So think about yourself and don't bother about others. Death accompanies you in your walk, sits down when you sit, he travels long distance with you, and returns with thee. With age a man grows weak, his skin is wrinkled and his hair turns grey. Now tell me how can you prevent these? Man rejoices at the rise of the sun and he feels delighted at the approach of night, but he does not understand that his life by this time has been shortened. People are delighted at the advent of a new season, but they do not understand that with the revolution of seasons their longevity has been shortened. As in the vast ocean one piece of wood comes in contact with another (by the force of the current, i.e., by mere accident) but in time becomes separated, so you should understand a man's association with wealth, wife and children. It is impossible to get rid of this eternal chain of birth and death. He who laments for another's death cannot, however, prevent his own.

"As a traveller follows another seeing him going ahead of him, so we shall have to follow our predecessors. Why should then a man mourn for another when he cannot alter his own inevitable end? Seeing life ebbing fast like the flow of a stream which cannot be called back, man should engage himself in search of happiness since happiness is the end of all. Our virtuous father after performing many meritorious sacrifices has repaired to heaven. It is not proper to mourn for him. He has attained heavenly bliss by casting off his infirm

body, so we must no more weep for him. In all circumstances, intelligent people subdue grief, lamentations and tears, so be not overwhelmed with grief, go back to Ayodhya and reside in the capital. This was the wish of our father and let me pursue my own duties here. He was our father and it is not proper to disobey his commands. You ought to honour him. It is our duty to obey our superiors who wish for our ultimate good. Father has attained heaven by his own merits, you may rest assured. Now attend to your own duties."

Thus saying Rama lapsed into silence.

Then Bharata returned, "My noble lord, who is like you in this world? Sorrow cannot afflict you, nor pleasure can buoy you up. You are an ideal to the aged people, though you consult them in times of doubt. To you, life and death, good and evil are all equal. You have nothing to grieve for. In fact, one who has acquired self-knowledge like you is not moved by any calamity or sorrow. You are truthful, wise and divine in nature, the mysteries of life and death are not unknown to you, so even intense sorrow cannot overpower you.

'What my mean-minded mother has done in my absence in a distant land had not the least approval of mine so be with me. It is for religious consideration that I have not as yet taken the life of this sinful woman. How would I commit such a nefarious act being born of illustrious Dasaratha? King Dasaratha was our father, king and preceptor, so I should not speak anything ill of him, but was this right (being cognisant of what is right and what is wrong) to act

in this manner at the instigation of his wife ? It is said that 'when one's end is near, his sense becomes perverted.' From the conduct of the king this adage seems to be true. However, now rectify the wrong that has been committed either through anger, ignorance or wrecklessness. The son is called "Apatya" because he saves his father from fall, so be thou a true son.

"It is not becoming of you to perpetuate the wrong done by father. What he has done is most unjust and highly reprehensible. So be gracious to comply with my request. How ill-matched is Kshatriya valour with forest-life, and matted locks with sovereignty ? How monstrous, it is not at all becoming of you to pursue such a perverse line of action. Governing the people is the duty of a Kshatriya, but which Kshatriya by putting aside this Kshatriya morality will adopt a dubious and an arduous course resorted to by old people ? But if you are inclined to arduous duties, then adopt the onerous duty of governing the four orders of people according to custom and morality. Virtuous people say that of the four orders¹ the life of a householder is the best, then why do you intend to abandon that ? My lord, in attainments and in age I am a boy to you. Who can govern in your presence ? I even

1 Four orders of life according to the old Hindus were :—

Brahmacharya (celibacy), Garhasthya (householder), Vanaprastha (retiring to the forest by eschewing worldly life), Bhikshu (mendicancy). Manu says, the life of a householder is the best, for he can attain the merits of other orders by discharging faithfully the household duties as all creatures depend on air, so all other orders are subordinate to Garhasthya order.

lack in common sense. I cannot live without your help, so you rule over the earth. Vasishta and other Ritwigas versed in Mantras with the subjects will present you the crown even here. After the coronation ceremony, go back to Ayodhya like Indra, the ruler of heaven. Absolve yourself from the threefold debts, viz., to the gods, to the ancestors and to the Rishis; heighten the miseries of your enemies and increase the pleasure of your friends, and rule over me. Rescue our revered father Dasaratha from sin by removing the disgrace of my mother Kaikeyi. I throw myself at thy feet and entreat you again and again and do me this favour. If you retire to another forest without granting my prayers, I tell you that I shall go along with you."

Bharata bowed down and thus entreated, but Rama did not acquiesce in his words; he was determined to carry out the mandate of his father. So he was both pleased and pained by Bharata's entreaties. Then all praised Bharata for his noble speech, and they all entreated Rama again and again.

Rama then returned, "Bharata, you are born of king Dasaratha, and what you have proposed is worthy of you. But father at the time of marrying your mother promised to the king of Kekaya that he would bestow the kingdom upon the son born of that marriage. Then he promised your mother two boons being pleased with her nursing at the time of the war between the Gods and the Asuras; therefore, your mother asked for the two boons, my exile and your installation to the throne. I have come to the forest with Janaki and Lakshmana to redeem father from his pledge, so you should also

without further delay accept the kingdom for observance of truth. Even for my satisfaction you should redeem father from his obligation and should greet your mother. Hear me, my boy, in Gaya high-souled Gaya at the time of sacrifice to please his departed ancestors, recited this Vedic hymn :

"He who saves his father from the hell named Put is called Putra, and he who saves¹ his father from all sorts of difficulties is also a Putra (or a true son). The wise people pray for many sons because at least one of them may go to Gaya (to offer pindas). Bharata, such was the belief of the former kings. So go back to Ayodhya and get yourself installed and rule over the people for their welfare with the help of Satrughna and the Brahmanas. I shall shortly repair with Janaki to the Dandaka forest. You rule over men, let me rule over the animals here. Go back with a contented mind and I shall too set forth to the Dandaka with delight. Let white umbrella shade your head. I shall take refuge under the cooler shadow of these forest trees. As Lakshmana is of great help to me, Satrughna will be of great help to you. Thus let us fulfil the vow of our father."

Then sage Javali observed, "Rama, you are intelligent and wise but let not your intelligence lead you to discomfitures like that of an ordinary person. Now mark, who is whose friend? Who is entitled to a thing by virtue of his relation? Man is born alone and dies alone. He is an insane person who becomes affec-

1 The Sanskrit verb 'trayati' means to save : Put (hell) and root tra.

tionately attached to another, as his father or mother. As at the time of setting out for a foreign land, a man resides outside his village, and on the next morning he leaves it (without remorse) you should know such is a man's relation with his father, mother, house and wealth. Good people never become attached to these. Therefore, it is not becoming of you to renounce the ancestral kingdom at the request of your father, and to live in this dense forest full of perils. Go back to prosperous Ayodhya, and the city is waiting for you like a woman wearing a single braid of hair.¹ You will pass your days happily 'like Indra, the ruler of Gods. Dasaratha was nobody to you, so you were none to him. He was other than your father ; you are also other than his son. So act as I tell you to do. Father is regarded as a mere instrumental cause of birth. In fact, the germinal seed which mother holds in her womb during her course is the true cause of generation. Now, king Dasaratha has gone to a place where every man is bound to go at last—it is his nature—but you are spoiling everything by your foolishness (perverse intellect). I am really anxious for those who, disregarding all tangible duties and works that lie within the province of perception, busy themselves with (unsubstantial) virtue alone ; they after suffering various miseries here on earth are at last annihilated by death. You find people to perform Astaka Sradh in honour of their dead ancestors, but this means only sheer waste of rice, for

¹ The custom was that a woman separated from her husband or lover discarded all her toilets and used to wait for the union with her uncombed hair woven into a single braid.

who has ever heard that a dead man can eat? If food taken by one could nourish another's body, then feed one on behalf of a person living in a distant country. But does this serve the man living in a distant land as his food—does he feel gratified by it? Certainly not. The injunctions about worship of Gods, sacrifice, gifts and penance have been laid down in the Shastras by clever people, just to rule over people and to make them submissive and disposed to charity. Therefore, O Rama, content yourself with this idea that there is no after-world, nor any religious practice for attaining that. Follow what is within your experience and do not trouble yourself with what lies beyond the province of human experience. Bharata is entreating you, take common sense view of the thing approved by all, and accept the monarchy."

But this speech of Javali failed to produce any change in Rama's mind, and he observing the rules of piety returned, "O sage, what you have just now said for my interest, though this appears like a desirable course of action is not indeed so (it looks like duty, but it is not). He who is vicious and walks along a wrong path and preaches against the doctrines of the Shastras is not honoured by good people. One's conduct shows whether one is high-born or low-born, whether he is valiant or vain, pure or impure. If I act according to your advice, various mischiefs will ensue. Your view is most unliberal. Acting according to your precept a mean-charactered fellow may appear as honourable, the vicious may appear as pure, and the inauspicious one may look like auspicious. I shall be condemned by the virtuous and shall be guilty of violating the family

custom if I adopt this reprehensible course of action as my duty. I cannot then hope to attain the blissful state (after death) for the fulfilment of a vow, and the subjects following my example will go on astray. So what you have said does not appear to be commendable to me.

"The immemorial royal polity, where kindness plays a prominent part, is based upon truth. Wonderful is the potentiality of truth ; all the world is being held by it. Gods and saints honour truth greatly ; truthful people attain Brahmaloка ; love of truth is at the root of all religions. Truth is God, and religion is based upon it, nay everything rests on truth. There is nothing greater than truth. The Vedas, enjoining Sacrifice, Charity, Homa and Penance are founded upon truth. The earth (wealth), reputation and fame crave for him who is truthful. So from all considerations it is desirable to be truthful. I shall renounce that so-called religion, or Kshatriya morality that is followed by the low, mean-minded, cruel and greedy people. One may commit three kinds of sins, either by his body, or by his mind, or by his speech. One man maintains his family, another goes to hell, and another is honoured by the gods in heaven. My father was devoted to truth. Why should I disobey that which he laid upon me, being bound by truth. To him I am bound by truth, and I shall not breach the bridge of truth through ignorance, covetousness, anger or pride. I have heard that Gods and ancestors do not accept any offerings of an untruthful man. This devotion of truth is the highest of all spiritual faiths. Noble men have always borne its burden. Therefore I have become anxious to follow it.

Now, what you have explained to me with your reasons appears to be quite hateful to me. How can I agree to Bharata's proposal after accepting my decree of exile by vowing before my father ? Kaikeyi was greatly pleased when I bound myself by truth. How can I now displease her ? I shall henceforth pass my days by leading a chaste and pure life by subsisting on fruits and roots, to the satisfaction of the Gods and ancestors. Having come to this field of action one should do what is good, but not what is only desirable. Agni, Vayu and Soma have attained their lofty positions by their own meritorious acts. Indra, the king of Gods, has obtained his heavenly kingdom by the performance of hundred sacrifices, this is why he is called Satakratu.

"O sage, truth, religion, penance, charity, sweet speech, worship of gods, hospitality towards the guests are the ways that lead to heaven ; the Brahmanas have assigned them to be means of salvation. Your words are quite antagonistic to the Vedas and religion, and father was to be blamed for appointing you as a priest. As a Buddhist¹ is punishable like a thief, so an atheist deserves to be punished, and an atheist is to be shunned, as condemned by the Vedas, and wise people should not talk with him. Better Brahmanas than you practise this religion and perform sacrifices, penances and other rites. In fact those who are religious, generous, and affectionate are honoured in this world."

When Rama said this with some temper, Javali humbly replied, "Rama, I am neither an atheist, nor am

¹ It is clear, it is an interpolation. The original Ramayana was certainly compiled long before rise of Buddha.

I an advocate of atheism, and it is not true that there is no after-world after death. I become a believer or an atheist as occasions demand. Time has come when one should grow an atheist, and I have said all these just to induce you to leave the forest, but now I withdraw my words for your satisfaction."

Then saintly Vasishtha seeing Rama somewhat irritated said, "My boy, Javali is quite conversant with the final departure of human beings to the other world and their re-birth. He has said these just to persuade you to return to Ayodhya. Rama, you are the descendant of king Dasaratha ; it is your duty to ascend the throne and rule over the kingdom. It is the custom amongst the Ikshwakus that the eldest should ascend the throne, and it is not proper for you to violate that time-honoured custom. So you rule over the earth like your father Dasaratha.

"My boy, three persons are adorable on earth—father, mother and the preceptor. Rama, I am your preceptor as well as that of your father, and you will attain spiritual merits by obeying my words, and also by the act of protecting your friends, relations, people and the princes under you. It does not behove thee to disregard the words of your aged mother—pious Kausalya, not to slight the repeated requests of virtuous Bharata for your return."

Rama, hearing these words of Vasishtha, replied, "O sage, father and mother do their utmost to feed their children, and to keep them healthy and clean, they encourage them to play and always use sweet speeches towards them. Their debts can never be repaid. So I cannot disobey the words of my procreator, father.

Then Bharata looked greatly depressed and said, "Sumantra, spread Kusha grass on the ground, I shall fast here so long Rama is not pleased. As a Brahmin creditor sits at the door of his debtor for the recovery of his money, so I shall lie down before this cottage covering myself from head to foot, and shall abstain from all food."

Sumantra, though ordered, looked at Rama's face. Thereupon, Bharata himself spread Kusha on the ground, and lay down on it.

Then Rama said, "What have I done that you will starve yourself to death? This is a custom prevalent amongst the Brahmanas but not amongst the Kshatriyas. So rise up and give up this arduous vow."

Bharata then looked round and addressing the citizens said, "Why are you not saying anything to Rama?"

They replied, "What you have said is in no way unjust, and the earnestness which magnanimous Rama is showing for carrying out the wishes of his father appears to be equally just. This is why we have so long remained silent."

Then Rama said, "Bharata, you have heard what these good friends have just now said. Judge yourself their words. Just rise up, touch my body and then take water."

Bharata then rose from the ground and addressing the courtiers said, "Gentlemen, hear me, and listen to me, my counsellors, I do not crave for this kingdom, nor have I instigated mother for it, nor did I know that Rama would have to take shelter in the woods. If it is decided by him to live here in obedience to father's

mandate, then I shall live fourteen years in the forest as his substitute."

Rama was greatly astonished at Bharata's words. Then addressing the citizens and villagers he said, "You see, neither I nor Bharata should annul any gift, sale, or mortgage effected by our father during his life-time. So it will be highly disreputable on my part to appoint a substitute of mine to live in the forest. Nothing unjust has been done by Kaikeyi, nor father has done any wrong. I know Bharata, he is full of forgiveness and also full of respect towards the superiors. On my return from the forest, I shall share the kingdom with him. Brother Bharata, I have acted as mother Kaikeyi has asked; do thou now absolve father from the obligations of his promise."

When Rama and Bharata were thus talking, heavenly and royal saints and Gandharvas appeared on the scene. They praised both the brothers most lavishly and said, "He is blessed who has two righteous sons like you. We have been greatly delighted by your words." Then thinking about the destruction of Ravana they persuaded Bharata, saying, "O hero, you are born of a noble family, and you are wise and famous. If you care for the reputation of your father, then agree to what Rama has said. We also wish that he should be absolved from his obligations by carrying out his promise."

Thus saying they went to their respective abodes.

Bharata once more entreated Rama saying, "O Aīya, fulfil the desire of Kausalya. It won't be possible for me to rule this vast kingdom, or to please the subjects. As the cultivator anxiously waits for rain, so all the

people are eagerly waiting for you. Therefore accept the kingdom and then give it up to whomsoever you please."

Saying this, lotus-eyed Bharata, dark as a cloud, threw himself at the feet of Rama and entreated him again and again.

Rama took up Bharata in his lap, and said in a sweet voice like that of a singing swan, "My boy, you have attained that state of mind which is only natural and which is the fruit of education and culture. Now do your duty with the help of wise counsellors and friends. The moon may lose its beauty, the Himalayas its snow, the ocean may overstep the limits of the coast, but I shall never refrain from fulfilling the promise of my father. My darling, don't mind, what your mother has done either for her love for you or from covetousness. You should honour and respect your mother as one ought to."

Hearing these words of Rama, resplendent with energy like the sun, and beautiful like the moon of the second lunar day of the month,¹ Bharata said, "O Arya, now take off from your feet those sandals wrought in gold. These shall protect what the people possess and procure them what they want."

Then Rama took off the sandals and offered them to Bharata. Bharata took them with a profound bow and said, "I shall dedicate the kingdom to these sandals, and for fourteen years I shall wait in expectation of you by wearing bark and subsisting upon fruits and roots and shall live in the outskirts of the city with matted

1 First day after the New moon.

looks, but if I do not find you on the first day of the fifteenth year, then I shall surely cast myself into flames."

Rama agreed to Bharata's words, and embracing him in deep affection said, "Myself and Janaki conjure you to protect mother Kausalya. Never be rude to her."

Saying this Rama with tearful eyes looked at Bharata.

Then Bharata placing those bright sandals on the head of an elephant, went round Rama. Then Rama steadfast as the Himalayas in piety, after paying his respects to Vasishtha, took leave of Bharata, Satrughna, counsellors and the people in succession. At that time the voices of Rama's mothers were choked with tears. Rama too after paying homage to them with sobs entered the cottage.

CHAPTER XLII

BHARATA'S RETURN

Then Bharata carrying Rama's sandals on his head, got upon a chariot with Satrughna and set out with sage Vasishtha, Vamadeva and Javali.

After covering a long distance they arrived at the hermitage of Bharadwaja and on being questioned, Bharata said how even after repeated entreaties Rama refused to accept the kingdom and that he was taking with him the glittering sandals of Rama to install them on the throne.

Bharadwaja was mightily pleased at this news and said that death could not annihilate Dasaratha since he had left such a virtuous son like him. Bharata then proceeded towards Ayodhya with his host. He crossed the rippling

Jamuna and the Ganges and passed through Srīngaverpur and then entered Ayodhya, resounding the streets by the deep rumbling noise of his chariot, but was pained by the deserted look of the city which appeared gloomy like a moonless night. It looked like the planet Rohini, bright with the lustre of the moon, when she is forlorn on account of her lover being afflicted with Rahu (the enemy of the moon). The busy hum of the city was hushed, and it looked like a solitary dias after the sacrifice was over, and it looked as if a star fell from the heaven on the extinction of its light, or like a flowery creeper with mad bees humming over it but scorched by a sudden forest-fire. The shops and stalls were closed, the streets were deserted and were full of dirt. On the whole it presented a wretched view like an uncovered and unclean drinking place with all the wine drained and strewn with broken vessels.

Bharata then addressing Sumantra broke forth in grief, "Sumantra, why that music is not heard in Ayodhya as was heard before? Why there is intoxicating smell of liquor, and not fragrance of garlands and sweet incense of Aguru and Sandal? Why there is no deep rumbling noise of traffic in the city? Its former gay appearance is over. In fact, the splendour of Ayodhya has left the city along with Rama. It has no beauty now. When shall Rama come back like a grand carnival, like rain in the summer, and will gladden the hearts of the people?"

Bharata then keeping his mothers in Ayodhya said to Vasishta and others, "I shall go to Nandigram and I invite you all there. I shall suffer there the pangs of separation from my brother. Father has gone to

heaven, and worshipful brother is in the forest ; nothing is more painful than this. Now just for the kingdom I shall be waiting for Rama, for Rama is the real king."

Then Vasishtha and others observed, "What you have said out of brotherly love is really commendable and quite worthy of you. You are honest and bear great love for your brother. Who will not approve of your words ?"

Bharata then asked the charioteer to yoke horses to the chariot and after greeting his mothers he got upon the car with Satrughna, and proceeded to Nandigram with counsellors and priests. Even the citizens, though not invited or asked, began to follow Bharata. Bharata then entered Nandigarm carrying the sandals on his head. Then addressing the priests, Bharata said, "Worshipful Rama has bestowed the kingdom on me as a trust. These sandals inlaid with gold will govern the kingdom."

Then after bowing to the sandals, turning to the people, he said, "Speedily hold the royal umbrella over it—it is the representative of Rama. Rama has consigned the kingdom as a trust to me, so I shall have to protect it till his return. When he will come back, I shall myself with my own hands put on these sandals to Rama's feet and after reconveying everything to him I shall pass my days in his service and then be absolved from sin."

Thus saying Bharata with matted locks installed the sandals on the throne and out of deep respect himself stood by it by holding the umbrella and chowri in hands. Bharata then carried on the government as its subordinate, and whenever anything was brought, he first formally presented it to the sandals and then it was kept in deposit in the treasury.

CHAPTER XLIII

LEAVING THE CHITRAKUTA

Rama while living in the Chitrakuta one day found the ascetics greatly agitated. Rama grew anxious on account of this and with great humiliation he asked their chief, "O venerable one, have you found me in any way deviating from the practices of former sovereigns that might cause disturbance to your minds? Has Lakshmana committed any wrong through carelessness? Is not Janaki devoted to your service? Has she neglected her duty for her attachment towards me?"

Then an aged ascetic said that there was no fault on the part of Sita or of anybody, but of late a Rakshasa—a formidable rover of night—was creating disturbances and thereby interrupting their religious practices and penances. For this the hermits were getting themselves ready to go to the beautiful hermitage of sage Kanwa and asked Rama to accompany them if he liked and repeatedly requested Rama to leave the place.

After this Rama had little inclination to live in that place for various reasons. At that place the memories of his mothers, brothers and relatives began to haunt him off and on. Besides the place was rendered dirty by Bharata's hosts. Rama then decided to leave the place and left for the hermitage of saint Atri with Janaki and Lakshmana.

Sage Atri received Rama, Lakshmana and Janaki with warm hospitality. The famous sage then called his virtuous wife Anusuya, devoted to penance, and asked her to receive Sita, and turning to Rama said,

"My boy, when people were suffering immensely from a ten-year drought, this pious Anusuya created fruits and roots and even caused the Ganges to flow in the asylum by her psychic power. She passed ten thousand years in penance. Once sage Mandavya cursed the wife of a monk saying that she would turn a widow as soon as the night would be over, but this devout lady rendered one night long as ten nights by her psychic power. She is gentle and pure. Let Janaki go to her."

Rama then turned to Sita and said, "Princess, you have heard what the sage has said, and have to go to that pious lady for your benefit."

Thereupon Sita went to Anusuya. She was all hoary with age and was trembling like a plantain tree in the breeze. Janaki mentioned her name and after bowing at her feet she enquired about her welfare in joined hands.

Seeing Janaki, Anusuya remarked, "Janaki, you know what is righteousness; therefore by forsaking your relations, wealth and vanities you have followed Rama in exile. She who loves her husband, whether living in the city or in the forest, whether he be attached to her or ill-disposed towards her, attains great spiritual bliss. Whether the husband be a libertine or wayward or be indigent, he is always adorable to a wife of noble character. I do not know of a more constant friend than husband, like the merits acquired by penance. Those who crave for their husbands only for carnality are harlots (in their hearts) and they are incapable of judging merits and demerits of such acts. An ill-charactered woman like that is apt to fall into vices and reap infamy. But those who are good and qualified like you

are adored in heaven. So you should follow your husband in everything."

Janaki then gently replied, "There is nothing strange that you will teach me thus. O worshipful lady, I also know that husband is always an object of respect to the wife. The wife should unhesitatingly devote herself to his services, even if the husband be of bad character, but what shall I say in his case, who is self-controlled, accomplished, steadfast, constant, just and devoted to his parents? Rama loves and honours his other mothers like Kausalya. Rama looks upon her as his mother on whom Dasaratha ever cast his glance. I have not forgotten the advices imparted to me by honourable Kausalya on the eve of my coming to this dense forest nor I have forgotten what mother asked me to observe at the time of marriage in the presence of sacred fire. In fact, my friends and relations have installed into my heart that devotion to the husband is the highest virtue of a wife. Savitri is adored in heaven for this devotion and you too have attained such merit by this devotion. Rohini, the foremost of women, never for a moment appears in the sky without the moon. In fact, many chaste and devoted women have attained heaven by their virtues."

Anusuya was greatly delighted at Sita's speech and kissing her head the venerable lady said, "My darling, by my penance I have acquired great powers. I want to grant you some boons. Now tell me what will please you. Tell me your desire."

Sita was greatly astonished at this and replied with a sweet smile, "Lady, I am more than thankful that you have been pleased with me (for your kindness towards

me)." Anusuya was still more pleased with these words of Sita and said, "My daughter, I have been exceedingly delighted at your words. I shall now attain a desire of mine. Take this beautiful garland, apparel, these ornaments, and cosmetics. With these you will appear exceedingly beautiful in person. These are worthy of you, and they will be never tarnished by use. Janaki, by daubing your body with this paint, you will enhance the beauty of Rama sitting by his side, as goddess Kamala graces Narayana by her presence."

Then Sita after accepting those affectionate presents sat by her side. Then the ascetic woman asked, "My daughter, I have heard that Rama got you as wife in Swayamvara, now tell me everything about it." Then Janaki replied, "O worshipful lady, hear me then. There reigns a virtuous king named Janaka in Mithila. He found me one day while ploughing the field. He was then levelling the ground for sacrifice. I was found lying on the ground covered with mud. He was greatly astonished finding me in that situation. As he had no issue of his own, he affectionately took me in his lap. At that moment a voice from above said, 'O king, from this day she will truly be a daughter unto you.' King Janaka was greatly delighted at this, and from that time he began to prosper.

"He then placed me in the hands of her queen anxious for a child, and she brought me up with motherly affection. In course of time I gained my marriageable age. My father grew anxious and felt distressed like a poor man who has lost his money. Even if the father of the girl be an influential person like Indra, he has to suffer many indignities at the hands of

his equals and inferiors! When he failed to procure a desirable bridegroom for me, he thought of holding a Swayamvara. Formerly, God Varuna had given to royal saint Devarata a formidable bow with excellent quiver and arrows. The bow was a heavy one which the kings could not raise or bend, and my truthful father promised to confer me on him who would be able to put string to this bow. Thus passed many a day.

"Then sage Viswamitra came to witness father's sacrifice in Mithila with Rama and Lakshmana in his company. Thereupon Rama wished to see the bow and he bent it within the twinkle of an eye, nay he broke it into two! Then my truthful father was about to bestow me on Rama by holding up a vessel of water.¹ But gentle Rama did not agree to marry without his father's consent. Father then brought my father-in-law, king Dasaratha from Ayodhya and bestowed me on Rama. I have got a beautiful sister named Urmila, she has been married to Lakshmana. Since then I am devoted to my husband."

Having heard this, the pious wife of Atri kissed Sita's head and said, "I am glad to hear all these. Now the sun is on the decline. The birds are returning to their nests after a day's quest for food, chirping sweet notes in their flight. The monks after evening bath are returning in wet barks with pitchers of water on their shoulders. Look, columns of smoke—reddish like the hue of a pigeon's neck—are rising from the sacrificial fire. Trees of thin foliage appear dense in darkness.

1 Sprinkling of water with Mantras is necessary in every solemn occasion.

The hermitage deer are reposing on the dais. Animals that rove in night are going to and fro. Nothing is visible at a distance. The night is come. The moon has ascended the sky clothed in light. The stars have become visible. Janaki, now I permit you to go and minister to your husband. You have gratified me by your sweet speech, now oblige me by putting on these ornaments."

Then Sita—beautiful like the daughter of a god—adorned her person with those ornaments and went to Rama after bowing at the venerable lady's feet. Rama was delighted at the sight of these affectionate presents and Lakshmana too was immensely pleased at this warm hospitality.

Rama passed the night in the hermitage of Atri. In the morning after bath, he asked the monks about the path to go to another forest. The ascetics finding Rama and Lakshmana about to start said, "Prince, that part of the forest abounds in ferocious animals and blood-thirsty Rakshasas. These Rakshasas are cannibals and they feed upon the flesh of the ascetics. Do you suppress them? This is the path through which the ascetics gather fruits. You will be able to enter into dense forest through this route."

Thus after being warned by the ascetics, and after having received blessing from them, Rama entered the deep forest with Lakshmana and Janaki, as the sun enters a bank of heavy clouds.

THE END OF AYODHYA KANDAM

ARANYA KANDAM

CHAPTER I

DESTRUCTION OF VIRADH

On entering the mighty forest of Dandaka, Rama saw hermitages surrounded by a halo of spiritual glory, where lived old hermits subsisting on fruits and roots, clad in barks, and versed in the Vedas. The whole place was strewn over with Kusha grass and floral offerings of worship. At some places articles of worship were kept, while at others sacrifices were going on, and there rose a continual chant of the Vedic hymns. It abounded in sweet fruit-bearing trees and there were tanks full of full-blown lotuses. Rama entered the sanctuary by unstringing his bow.

The hermits seeing Rama, beautiful like the newly-risen moon, accompanied by Lakshmana and Janaki, greeted him with sweet words. They were struck with wonder by the beauty and grace of Rama, and also at the sight of his elegant dress, and they stared at him with steadfast eyes.

They then, asked Rama to take his seat inside a cottage where they received him with due rites of hospitality, offering fruits, flowers, roots and water, and then addressing Rama they said in a body :

"Rama ! you are honourable and the defender of our faith. You are our supreme lord, and the protector of all. All pay homage and one-fourth of the income to the king who rules justly, and for this he is entitled to enjoy all good things. You are our king,

whether you reside in the forest or in the city. It is your duty to protect us. We have subdued our passions, and do not chastise anybody. So like a child in the mother's womb, we are worthy of your protection."

Saying this, the hermits offered Rama various fruits and flowers, and they tried to please Rama in various ways.

On the following day, at sunrise, Rama entered the forest with Lakshmana and Janaki and found the place abounding in various kinds of wild animals. Tigers and bears were roving about freely, and shrubs and creepers were torn by their movements, and tanks and pools rendered muddy, and there was a continual droning noise of beetles.

On arriving there Rama found a terrible Rakshasa, huge as a mountain-peak, with wide mouth, sunken eyes, and a protruding belly. The monster was clad in a blood-stained tiger-skin and was roaring dreadfully by opening his wide mouth, terrible like the jaws of death, after piercing with his iron-spike three lions, two panthers, four tigers, ten deer and the head of a huge tusker dripping fat.

That cannibal rushed at Rama, Lakshmana and Janaki the moment he saw them, like the God of Death and shook the earth by his terrible yells, and after snatching away Sita, he shouted from some distance, "Who are you puny creatures? Why have you entered the Dandaka forest with a woman? You have matted your locks, put on barks, and carry bows in your hands! You look like ascetics, but why do you two live with one woman? Why have you assumed the garb of a monk and act otherwise? That beautiful

woman will henceforth be my wife. I am a Rakshasa and my name is Viradh. I constantly feed upon the flesh of the hermits and rove about freely in the forest. Now I shall drink your blood."

Sita was greatly frightened by these words and she began to tremble like a plantain leaf. Then Rama with a distressful heart addressing Lakshmana said:

"Look, the daughter of king Janaka and my wife is in the lap of the monster. The desire of step-mother Kaikeyi has today been fulfilled. To tell you the truth, I have been more distressed today at the sight of Sita being touched by another than by the loss of kingdom or by father's death."

Then Lakshmana in rage and sorrow replied, "*Arya* ! you are the lord of all, and I am your servant, then why do you lament like a helpless man ? I shall kill this monster with a single shaft, and the earth will drink his gore. I shall hurl the full brunt of my rage against that brute, and he will fall prostrate on the ground."

The Rakshasa then cried out resounding the forest with his harsh grating voice, "Tell me who are you and where will you go ?"

Rama answered, "We are Kshatriyas, born of the Ikshwaku line, and are of pure character and have come to the forest for some reason. We are also eager to know who you are."

Viradh said, "I am the son of Yava, my mother is Shataprada and my name is Viradh. Having gratified Brahma by my penance and devotion, I have got a boon from him that none will be able to destroy me by any weapon. Now give up the hope of this woman and run

away from this place, or I shall kill you immediately."

Rama grew angry at this and said, "Ah, thou wretched creature! you are surely seeking your death." Saying this, he at once discharged seven sharp arrows flaming like fire from his bow, which struck the monster and drew forth his blood. Viradh then let off Sita, rushed towards Rama brandishing a terrific lance, gaping wide his mouth. Rama and Lakshmana began to shower their missiles at him. Rama cut off the lance with two shafts. Rama and Lakshmana then attacked him with formidable swords, dreadful as black snakes. But Viradh caught hold of them and proceeded towards the forest dragging them by force.

At that sight, Janaki raised her hands and broke forth in sorrow, "The terrible monster is taking away truthful Rama and Lakshmana. Let tigers devour me now! I bow down to you, Oh Rakshasa chief! Please leave them and take me instead."

At these words of Janaki, Rama and Lakshmana resolved to kill Viradh without further delay, and Lakshmana broke Viradh's left arm, and Rama his right, and Viradh fainted in agony. Rama and Lakshmana, then, showered kicks and blows upon the prostrate body. Yet the monster did not expire. Finding the Rakshasa thus invulnerable to weapons, Rama proposed to bury him alive and asked Lakshmana to dig a spacious ditch for the same, and he planted his foot upon the neck of the prostrate monster.

Hearing those words of Rama, Viradh began to speak, "O lion amongst men! I am about to die; through ignorance I could not recognise you first that

you are Kausalya's son, Rama ; he is Lakshmana and she is worshipful Janaki. I have got this terrible form of a Rakshasa through a curse. My name is Tamvaru, and I am a Gandharva. I once offended Kuvera, the lord of the Yakshas, by my absence, on account of my attachment for Rambha, and he then punished me with a curse. Softened by my entreaties, Kuvera, at last, blessed me saying that when king Dasaratha's son Rama would slay me in battle I would get back my former state of a Yaksha. My lord ! through your grace I have been absolved from that terrible curse, and I shall now be able to repair to him. Half a *yojana* from this place there lives a pious hermit effulgent like the sun, named Sharabhangha. Soon go to him, he will do you good. My end is near. Throw me into a ditch. It is an immemorial custom for dead Rakshasas to be buried.¹ This is how we attain salvation."

Lakshmana then dug out a spacious ditch and threw the monster into it.

CHAPTER II

SAGE SHARABHANGA

After the destruction of Viradh, Rama and Lakshmana repaired towards the hermitage of Sharabhangha.

On arriving at the hermitage they saw a wonderful thing. There, they found Indra, the king of gods, decked in heavenly jewels and clad in elegant robes, radiating a bright effulgence from his person, and worshipped by many gods who had accompanied him. He

1 This apparently refers to the custom of burying the dead instead of burning them, more antique in origin. Vide Rig Veda and also Dr. Bajendra Lal Mitter's works.

was standing there, yet his feet did not touch the ground! His chariot was stationed in the sky, yoked with yellow-coloured steeds, and at a short distance shone the royal umbrella beautiful as the moon, white as the fleecy clouds and decked with variegated wreaths. Two beautiful women were fanning him with *chowris* from his two sides, and gods and saints were singing his praise.

He was then talking to Sharabhanga: and Rama taking him to be Indra, addressed Lakshmana as follows:

"Look, what a wonderful chariot! How bright and beautiful! It shines like the blazing sun in the sky! Those horses surely belong to the king of gods of which we have heard previously. Those young men with broad chests wearing ear-rings and holding swords in their hands appear like tigers quite unapproachable for their might. They have put on red clothes and jewel necklaces like wreaths of flames, and they appear to be of twenty-five years of age, this is the permanent age of the celestial youths. You wait with Janaki till I ascertain who is that effulgent person in the car."

Saying this Rama proceeded towards the hermitage of Sharabhanga.

Then Indra seeing Rama coming in that direction said to the gods, "Behold! Rama is coming hither. Let us leave this place before he greets us, so he will miss us. I shall appear before him after he conquers the great difficulties and dangers that lie before him. He will have to achieve a great thing, incapable of being performed by others."

Saying this Indra disappeared with the gods after

paying homage to Sharabhangā and inviting him to the heavenly region.

Then Rāma entered the hermitage with his brother and wife. At that time, the sage Sharabhangā was seated in the chamber of fire-worship. The sage received them with due hospitality and assigned a separate place for them.

Rāma then asked, "Tell me, O sage ! why the king of gods did pay this visit to the *ashrama* ?"

Sharabhangā replied, "My boy ! I have secured *Brahmaloka* by severe penance and meditation. Indra came to invite me to that region. But I did not go there, knowing that a dear and worthy guest like you was close to my hermitage. You are pious, and I have been greatly gratified by your presence. I shall now repair to *Brahmaloka*. I have attained different regions by my religious merits, and I wish you would accept them."

Then Rāma, versed in the *Shastras*, replied, "O sage ! I wish to attain blissful region by my own virtue. Now tell me where shall I take shelter in this forest ?"

Then Sharabhangā said, "My boy ! there lives a virtuous saint named Sutikshna. He will do you good. At a short distance flows the Mandakini through a flowery vale ; proceed in the opposite direction and you will then reach the hermitage. Now I have indicated to you the way ; just wait for a moment, I shall cast off this infirm body in your presence, as a snake casts off its slough."

Saying this, Sharabhangā prepared a fire and after offering oblations with *Mantras* he entered into it. The fire at once reduced his skin, flesh, bones and hairs into

ashes. Then Sharabhanga assuming a youthful, effulgent body emerged from the fire. Thereafter passing the regions of the saints and the gods, he reached *Brahmaloka* and appeared before Brahma, the grandsire of all created beings, who was greatly pleased at his sight.

After the ascension of Sharabhanga to heaven, great sages as Vaikhanasas, Valakhilya, Sauprakhala, Marichipa, Ashmakuta, Patrahar, Dantalukhola, Unmajaka, Gatrasyya, Asyya, Anavakashika, Salilahar, Vayubhaksha,¹ Akashanilaya, Sthandilashayi, Adrapatara-sha and others appeared before Rama. These saints are devoted to meditation and are surrounded by a halo of spiritual shine.

They said to Rama, "As Indra is amongst the Gods, so are you the supreme lord of the Ikshwaku race and of the world at large. You have become famous in the three worlds for your valour and virtue. Full and perfect religion has fixed its permanent abode in you. You will forgive us for what we say as suitors to you. The king who receives one-sixth of people's income but does not protect his subjects incurs great sin, while, on the other hand, he who governs his people like his sons, reaps great fame on earth and attains *Brahmaloka* after death. The king is entitled even to the one-fourth of the religious merit that is acquired by saints and hermits living on fruits and roots. Rama! you are the lord of this forest abounding in Brahmanas, many of whom are losing their lives in the hands of the Rakshasas. Come and see their dead bodies. They are

1 Some of these names signify their asceticism, as Salilahar means one who lives on water only, Vayubhaksha means who feeds only on air.

tyrannising over the ascetics that live on the banks of the Mandakini and Pompa lake. You are the shelter of all. Please save us ; and there is no greater protector than you."

Then virtuous Rama replied, "O sages ! please do not talk like that. I am your obedient servant. Since I have come to the forest to redeem father from his pledge, I shall remedy this oppression of the Rakshasas."

Having assured them, Rama went in the company of the hermits. After crossing many deep streams, Rama arrived at a lofty peak like the Sumeru mountain. A dense forest extended at its foot and Rama on entering it found a hermitage in which was seated a sage stained with mud named Sutikshna.

Approaching him, Rama said with due humiliation, "O worshipful one ! I have come to pay my respects to you. Please break your silence."

Then Sutikshna after embracing Rama, said, "O hero ! have you come here safely ? This hermitage, seems to have been provided with its lord. It is for your sight that I have not yet renounced this body and repaired to heaven. I have heard that you have been deprived of your kingdom and have been dwelling in the Chitrakuta. Today, Indra came to my place and informed me about the region I have acquired by my religious merits. My boy, I now ask you for my satisfaction, to live in my hermitage with Lakshmana and Janaki."

Then Rama replied as Indra unto Brahma, "I shall attain the blissful region by my own piety, and I have heard from sage Sharabhanga of the Gautama clan

that you do good to all. Please tell me where am I to live in this forest."

Then that famous sage, Sutikshna said, "You live in my hermitage. A large number of hermits reside here, and it is also plentifully provided with fruits and roots all round the year. Only herds of deer come to this place ; they are bold but do not commit any harm. They simply bewitch the people by their tempting beauty. There is no other danger or interruption here."

Gentle Rama then said, "If I slay these deer by sharp arrows, you will be pained at heart, so I don't mean to live here long."

Sutikshna then said his evening prayers, and when night came, the sage offered Rama an ascetic's meal.

In the morning, Rama took his bath with Janaki in the translucent stream, and after saying his morning prayers went to Sutikshna and said, "We are extremely grateful for your kind hospitality ; now I ask your permission to leave the place. We are greatly anxious to see the hermitage of the ascetics, and the *Rishis* with me are asking me to make haste. Allow us to go before the sun assumes a haughty look, like a low person who has acquired wealth by evil means."

Rama then greeted Sutikshna with Lakshmana and Janaki, and Sutikshna blessing them said, "Go now safely with Lakshmana, and Sita will follow you like a shadow. Behold the beautiful hermitages of the ascetics residing in the Dandaka forest. You will find the woods in bloom and visited by deer and lovely-feathered tribes echoing with the wild notes of peacocks, lakes and pools strewn with lotuses and water-lilies and visited

by swans and ducks, and you will come across there beautiful fountains."

Rama then went round the sage and took his leave. Large-eyed Janaki then handed over swords and bows to their hands.

When Rama was about to set out with Lakshmana, Sita affectionately said, "My lord! virtue can only be acquired by renouncing all low desires. There are three kinds of sins—falsehood, adultery and anger without any provocation. The last two are more grave than the first one. You have never told any lies, nor will you do in future. You have no lustful hankering for another's wife, nor will you have that, rather you are devoted to your own wife. Virtue and truth are present in you. You are truthful, learned and have control over your senses. You are firm in your vows and obedient to your father. But you are now engaged in that sinful act which one commits through ignorance by killing a creature without any offence. You have agreed to protect the ascetics living in the forest; you are, therefore, proceeding with Lakshmana with bows and arrows to the Dandaka forest. But I have become greatly anxious on account of your departure. I am thinking of your actions and of the means that may contribute to your happiness. But at every step I feel greatly anxious on thy account. I don't wish that you should go to the Dandaka forest. If you go there, you will surely be involved in a conflict with the Rakshasas for the presence of arms highly inflames Kshatriya valour.

"My lord! formerly a pious ascetic was engaged in religious meditation in the calm recess of the woods.

Indra, in order to disturb his religious meditation, once appeared in the guise of a warrior and kept his sword as a trust with the ascetic. The ascetic then in fear of the violation of the trust, used to roam about the forest with that sword in hand, even when he went to gather fruits and roots. From this constant carrying of the sword, the ascetic by degrees grew cruel, and at last he gave up all religious meditations, and became engaged in the slaughter of all creatures. This story I have related to you just to illustrate that as fire produces change in the fuel, so contact of arms brings about a change in the human mind. My husband ! of course, I do not pretend to give you any advice but I humbly remind you of this out of love and deep regard for you. It is not proper to kill any creature unless it does some grave injury. A Kshatriya hero should do only that much which might be necessary for the protection of the ascetics living in the forest, and nothing more. Ah ! where are arms, where is the forest ? Where is religious meditation and where is Kshatriya valour ? These are quite antagonistic to each other. Please hold in respect what is proper to an ascetic. Resume the duties of a Kshatriya after your return to Ayodhya. You have been obliged to abdicate the throne and repair to the forest and my father-in-law and mother-in-law will be greatly pleased if you lead the life of a hermit. From righteousness comes wealth and from wealth happiness ; in short everything comes from religion.¹ Intelligent people acquire righteousness

1 The Sanskrit phrase : *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha* is very difficult to translate—*Dharma* apparently means righteousness, though literally it signifies religion ; *Artha* literally means wealth, but it signifies something like assets (as used in Political Economy) that is to say, the means

even by torturing their bodies but religion cannot come from pleasure or happiness. My lord! you know everything, and nothing is unknown to you. Who can aspire to advise you in matters of religion? I have said all these simply from the fickleness of a woman. Consult with Lakshmana and decide to your course of action."

Hearing Janaki's speech Rama said, "O noble lady! you have justly expounded the duties of a Kshatriya out of love for me. What shall I say in reply? You have yourself said that a Kshatriya should bear arms so that there may not exist any word as 'the distressed'. Now, the hermits of the Dandaka forest in distress have applied to me for help. They are harmless people and live on fruits and roots, but the cruel Rakshasas have caused great discomfort to them, and cannibal monsters are feeding on their flesh. I have promised them all help that lies in me, and asked them what I would do. They asked for my protection and said that they could have themselves destroyed the Rakshasas by their spiritual power but that would take away much from their religious merit, so they did not wish to do that, and for this reason they have so long refrained from cursing them. They further said that they were living in the forest depending on me. Without the slightest remorse I can give up my life, nay can even renounce you along with Lakshmana, but cannot swerve from my promise given to the Brahmanas. How can I act otherwise, when I would have done that even without their asking? Janaki, I have heard with gladness what you have said

that will enable one to obtain his objects of desire which are designated by the word *Kama*—covetousness or lust.

out of your love and good wishes towards me. Nobody says anything to him who is not dear to him, you are worthy of your birth. You are dearer to me than life, so please approve of my desire."

Having said this, Rama proceeded towards the romantic forest with Lakshmana carrying the bow in his hand. Rama went first, Sita was in the middle and Lakshmana followed them with bow in his hand.

CHAPTER III

SAGE AGASTYA

They passed various streams, lakes and hills in their journey. They then came to a lake measuring about a *yojana*. Its water was clear as crystal and was beautiful with white and red lotuses. Aquatic birds were sporting on its surface, and elephants stood on its banks. Sweet music was being heard on its bank but no human being was to be seen. Rama and Lakshmana were greatly astonished at this, and they asked a hermit named Dharmabhrit, "It is indeed a wonderful thing. We are greatly curious to know something about it." Dharmabhrit said, "The tank is known as the Pompa-sara; formerly, sage Mandakarni constructed it by his psychic power. Its waters never become dry. Once upon a time Mandakarni practised severe penances for ten thousand years, being seated within this tank. The gods got frightened at this; thinking that the Rishi might ask for some of their ranks, they engaged five nymphs to decoy the hermit. The Rishi fell a prey to his passions, and those nymphs became his wives. Mandakarni then grew young by his *yogic* power and built a secret chamber for those beauties. They then

lived happily with him. The sage is now amorously sporting with them, it is the sweet jingling sounds of their ornaments that you hear.

"Rama then found a beautiful and bright hermitage where he lived with Lakshmana and Sita. After some time he quitted that cottage and lived at some place for some months, somewhere for a year, at some place for four months, somewhere for six months or a month and a half, or for several months together. Thus ten years passed.

"After this Rama came back to sage Sutikshna's hermitage, and one day he respectfully said, 'O holy sire! I have heard from many that the great sage Agastya lives in this forest, but this is such a vast forest that I cannot ascertain that place. Now tell me where is that beautiful penance-grove that I may go there to pay my respects with Lakshmana and Janaki. It is my earnest desire to attend upon him.'"

Sutikshna cheerfully replied, "I thought that I should myself ask you to do so, but fortunately you have asked it yourself. I shall tell you where lies the hermitage of Agastya. After going four *yojanas* to the south, you will come across the hermitage of Idhmavaha, brother of Agastya. The place is beautiful and abounds in pippali trees, and there are plenty of fruits and flowers and crystal lakes. Pass one night there, and you will find the hermitage of Agastya at a distance of one *yojana*. The spot is highly beautiful and abounds in various kinds of trees. If you are desirous of seeing him, you may start even today."

Rama then greeting Sutikshna set out for Agastya's hermitage with Lakshmana and Sita. Rama covered a

long distance by observing the picturesque beauties of the woods, hills and streams. Rama then cheerfully observed, "Surely, the hermitage of Idhmavaha is quite nigh. Look, how the trees are bent down with fruits and flowers, a pungent smell of the ripe pippalis is coming from the forest. Fuels and faggots are scattered here and there, and the ground is strewn with bright Kusha grass, and blue columns of smoke are rising from the woods. From what has been said by sage Sutikshna, it is clear that this is Idhmavaha's *ashrama*. His brother Agastya, for the good of mankind, has rendered the southern quarter habitable by destroying a Daitya, cruel as death.

"Formerly, two formidable Asuras named Ilval and Vatapi used to live here. They used to slaughter Brahmanas. Cruel Ilval assuming the guise of a Brahmana used to invite in Sanskrit the Brahmanas to the *Sradh* ceremony, and when the invited Brahmanas came, he used to feed the Brahmanas by cooking his brother, Vatapi, who wore the form of a sheep. When the meal was over, Ilval shouted aloud, 'Come out, Vatapi'; Vatapi, too bleating like a ram came out by tearing the bodies of the Brahmanas. Thus they have killed many Brahmanas. Once Agastya at the request of the gods ate Vatapi, being invited to the *Sradh*. After giving him water for washing his hands, Ilval cried, 'Come out, Vatapi.' Then wise Agastya replied with a smile, 'Ilval ! your brother in the form of a sheep has repaired to the abode of death being digested by fire ; so he cannot come out.'

"Then Ilval hearing of his brother's death rushed towards the sage in fury, but he was at once reduced

to ashes by the fiery look of the great ascetic. This is the hermitage of Idhmavaha—brother of that great Agastya who has performed that arduous feat out of pity towards the Brahmanas."

The sun went down and the evening came. Rama then said his evening prayers and accepted the hospitality of Idhmavaha with Lakshmana and Janaki and passed the night there. In the morning Rama took his leave and set out for the hermitage of Agastya.

Rama proceeded surveying the picturesque woods abounding in aquatic Kadamva, Panasa, Asoka, Tinisha, Naktamal, Madhuka, Vilva and Tinduka and other flower trees. These trees were covered with flowery creepers, roughly handled by the elephants with their trunks, and abounding in monkeys and wild birds.

At this sight, Rama said to Lakshmana, "I find the place exactly as I have heard about it. The woods are green and the beasts and birds appear to be gentle. Probably the hermitage of the great sage is not far. This hermitage no doubt belongs to the famous sage Agastya who has rendered the southern quarter safe by destroying the death-like Asura. For fear of him the Rakshasa do not dare to enter this place, but only cast their looks from a distance. From the time he has fixed his abode the rovers of the night have forgotten their former hostility and have become gentle. It is said that no danger befalls him whoever takes the name of Agastya.

"The Vindhya mountain was rising high to obstruct the rays of the sun but it has ceased to be so in obedience to Agastya's command. This is the hermitage of that long-lived and famous hermit. He is adorable,

pious and is always engaged in doing good to the honest people. He will do us good if we go to him. I shall pass here the rest of the term of my exile. The Gandharvas, the Siddhas and the Rishis here pass their time in meditation and in 'spare fast'. Here is no room for any cruel, deceitful or vicious persons. Here the gods, Yakshas, Patangas, Urugas live on frugal meal. Here the ascetics obtain salvation, and after casting off their mortal bodies, and assuming new forms, they ascend to heaven in cars resplendent as the sun. Lakshmana! we have arrived at the sacred hermitage. You go first and inform the great sage of my arrival with Janaki."

Lakshmana on entering the *ashrama* said to one of the disciples of Agastya, "The eldest son of king Dasaratha, heroic Rama, has come with his wife Janaki to see the sage. I am his younger brother. You might have heard that I am devoted to him. We have come to this dreadful forest in obedience to our father's mandate. We wish to see the worshipful Agastya; please do what you think best."

Maharshi Agastya hearing this from his disciple said, "It is indeed my good luck that Rama has come to see me. I was expecting this. Go, my boy, just bring him with his brother and wife with due honours."

The disciple then hurried to Lakshmana and told him that Rama might come to see the great sage.

Rama then entered the hermitage abounding in gentle deer, and beheld there the seats of Brahma, Agni, Rudra, Indra, Surya, Soma, Bhaga, Kuvera, Vayu, Dhata, Vidhata, Varuna holding the noose, Gayatri, and those of Vasuki, Garuda, Kartikeya and Dharma.¹

1 The particular places assigned for the worship of each

Here the sage Agastya with his disciples was awaiting the arrival of Rama. Rama on seeing that effulgent sage said to Lakshmana, "My boy ! the sage Agastya has issued from his retreat. From his solemn gravity I can infer him to be Agastya."

Thus saying Rama saluted the great sage beaming as the sun. Agastya embraced Rama and offered him seat and water for washing his feet and enquired after his welfare. After offering oblation into fire the hermit presented *arghya* and food to them according to the rites of *Vanaprastha* life. Rama sat down with joined hands when Agastya resumed his seat.

Then the sage Agastya said, "My boy ! if the guest is not received with due hospitality, even an ascetic is doomed to feed upon his own flesh like a false witness in the next world. You are king, righteous, heroic, noble and adorable ; you have graced my hermitage as a dear guest." With these words Agastya offered plenty of flowers, fruits and said, "My boy ! Indra has presented this golden, celestial bow of Vishnu beset with diamonds, made by Vishwakarma and infallible arrows glittering as the sun's rays named Brahmadata. This inexhaustible quiver is full of arrows flaming as fire and there is in golden scabbard a sword with golden hilt. Formerly Vishnu conquered the Asuras with this bow. Now take these weapons as Indra carries the thunderbolt."

Saying this, Agastya presented all those weapons to Rama, and said, "Rama ! I am glad that you have come to see me with Janaki and Lakshmana. May you be

one of the above mentioned deities. They are the Vedic gods, but in the yoga system there are different seats or bodily postures of such names.

happy. I have been much pleased with you all. I am sure you are fatigued by the journey, specially Janaki must be eager for rest. This tender girl never suffered any hardship before. She has come to the forest only out of her deep love for her husband. Do that as she may feel comfortable here. She has done a very arduous thing by following you. It is the nature of women from the beginning of creation that they become attached to persons in affluence but leave them in adversity. In their attachments they are unstable like lightning, in snapping affection they are sharp as weapons, and in evil they are quick as the wind, or the winged bird. But your wife is free from all these faults, and she has thus become foremost of chaste women like Arundhati in heaven. The place will no doubt be sanctified if you live here with her and Lakshmana."

At this Rama modestly replied, "You are my superior and worthy of respect and I think myself fortunate and blessed since you have been pleased with our conduct. Now kindly indicate to me a part of the forest where there is no scarcity of water so that I may live there happily by building a cottage."

Thereupon Agastya plunged himself in meditation for a moment and then said, "My boy ! there is a highly beautiful place called Panchavati at a distance of two *yojanas* from this place. There are plenty of fruits and roots. There is no scarcity of water, and there are plenty of birds and deer. Go, build there a cottage and live happily with Lakshmana. My boy ! I have ascertained your feelings by my *yoga*. You first resolved to live here but since you have already changed your mind I ask you to repair to the Panchavati. That place is not

very far from here. Janaki will surely feel happy there. You will be able to protect the hermits living in that peaceful, secluded forest. You possess valour and also good manners. Yonder is the Madhuka forest. Proceed towards the north of the forest by fixing your attention on the Nagrodha trees, you will then come by a hill and close to it lies the picturesque Panchavati."

After Agastya's words, Rama saluted the great sage and proceeded with Lakshmana and Janaki, carrying the bow and the quiver with him. On his way Rama saw a formidable bird of a very huge size, and thinking it to be a monster he questioned, "Who art thou?"

Thereupon the bird replied with a sweet voice, "My boy! I am a friend of your father."

Thereupon Rama bowed down and asked his name and lineage. The bird then in the course of giving his genealogy began with a narration from the beginning of creation and said, "My boy! I shall now tell you from the beginning who were known as Prajapatis in ancient time. Listen to me. Of the Prajapatis, Kardama was the first. Then came Vikrita, Shesa, powerful Sthanu, Marichi, Atri, Kratu, Pulastya, Pulaha, Angira, Prachetas, Daksha, Vivaswat, Aristhanemi and Kashyapa. Sixty daughters were born to Prajapati Daksha, and of them Kashyapa married eight. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kalika, Tamra, Krodhavaśha, Manu and Anala. After marriage Kashyapa told his wives to bring forth children who would be lord of the three worlds like himself. At this Aditi, Diti, Danu and Kalika agreed but some of them disagreed. Afterwards eight Vasus, twelve Rudras, twin Aswini *Kumaras* and

other thirty-three¹ gods were born of Aditi's womb, and the Daityas² were born of Diti. Then Aswagriva was born of Danu; and Naraka and Kalaka were born of Kalika; Krauncha was born of Tamra; Kraunchi, Bhasi, Shyeni, Dhritarasthri and Shuki, these famous five daughters were born of Tamra. Then Ulaka was born of Kraunchi; Bhasa was born of Bhasi, Shyena and Gridhra from Shyeni; swans, ducks, *chakravakas* were born from Dhritarasthri and Nata from Shuki. Nata gave birth to a daughter called Vinata. Afterwards ten daughters were born of Krodhavasha's womb and they were Mrigi, Mrigamada, Hari, Bhadramada, Matangi, Sharduli, Shweta, Surabhi, Sulakshmana, Surasa and Kadru. All the deer were born of Mrigi; Bhallaka, Chamaras and Sumaras were born of Mrigamada; a daughter named Iravati was born of Bhadramada, and her son is Airavata. Lions and monkeys were born of Hari's womb. Tigers and Go-langulas were born of Sharduli, elephants were born of Matangi and the elephants guarding the cardinal points of the world were born of Shweta. Two daughters were born to Surabhi, Rohini, and the famous Gandharvi. Bovine cattle were born of Rohini and horses of Gandharvi. Surasa gave birth to many-hooded serpents and Kadru and other snakes.

"Afterwards man was born of Manu."³ Brahmanas

1 These thirty-three subsequently in popular imagination have been elaborated into thirty-three millions.

2 Correspond to the Titans of Greek mythology.

3 Here we get in simple folklore a story of the creation of various species of living beings, and in this gradation man comes last. Modern science has established this point beyond all reasonable doubts.

were born from the mouth, the Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thighs and the Sudras from her feet. All sacred fruit-bearing trees were born of Anala. Garuda and Aruna were born of Vinata—Shuki's granddaughter. I am the son of that Aruna named Jatayu. Shyeni is my mother and my elder brother is Sampati. Rama, if you wish, I may be a friend to you in your forest-life. When you will be out with Lakshmana in quest of fruits, I shall protect Janaki."

Then Rama embraced him in delight and bowed to him in respect and heard from him the tales of friendship between his father and the bird. Rama then trusted him with the charge of Janaki's protection and entered the Panchavati forest.

CHAPTER IV

THE PANCHAVATI

Rama arriving at the Panchavati forest, full of ravenous animals, said to Lakshmana, "We have reached the place spoken of by worshipful Agastya. This blossoming forest is Panchavati. Survey it round and select a site where we may build a cottage. Just find out a place where Janaki will feel happy and we may be comfortable in every respect, where there are tanks and where the water is transparently clear, and which abounds in fruits, flowers, faggots and Kusha grass. You are most competent in these things."

Then gentle Lakshmana with joined hands spoke to Rama in presence of Janaki, "Arya ! I shall ever serve you as your obedient servant. You yourself please select a spot and then order me to build a cottage."

Rama was greatly pleased with Lakshmana's words

and then selected a highly commendable site, and taking Lakshmana there Rama said, "My boy, here is abundance of flower-trees, the ground is even and beautiful. At a short distance from this spot there is a beautiful pool interspersed with sweet-scented lotuses, pink and red, like the newly-risen dawn. There lies the Godavari spoken of by sage Agastya. The stream is always visited by the swans, cranes and the *chakravakas*. Many thirsty deer come to drink its water and blossoming trees stand on its bank. Look, there is the high range of hills with its caves and hollows. Hear the peacock's shrill cries. The hill abounds in gold, silver and copper, and for their presence it looks like an elephant with its body painted in variegated colours. Summits are crowned with Salas, Tamalas, Palmyras, Dates, Panasas, Jalakadamba, Trimish, Mangoes, Asokas, Tilakas, Champakas, Ketakis, Shyandanes, Sandal woods, Kadamvas, Lachukas, Lakuches, Dharvas, Aswakarnas, Khadiras, Shamis, Kinshukas, Patalas and other flower and fruit-bearing trees entwined with creepers and parasites. The place is indeed romantic. Henceforth we shall live here in friendship with Jatayu."

Then powerful Lakshmana in a short time constructed a beautiful cottage resting on graceful pillars. Its well-levelled floor was made of earth. Its bamboo-frame work was covered with strongly-tied Shami branches, Kusha, Kasha, and Shara leaves. After erecting the hut Lakshmana went to the Godavari stream. After bathing in its water he plucked lotuses, gathered fruits and then returned to the cottage and after offering flowers and performing due rites for dwelling in a new house. Lakshmana asked Rama to enter the cottage.

Rama and Janaki were exceedingly delighted at the sight of the cottage, and after a deep embrace Rama said in affectionate words, "My darling! I am more than delighted. You have accomplished a wonderful feat. Accept my embrace as thy reward. You are a reader of human heart. You are virtuous. When a son like you survives, father appears to be still living through you, though he is gone to the other world."

After this Rama lived happily for some time in that forest like a god in heavenly region.

After the autumn, came in the season of mists and dews. One day, at that time, Rama was going to the Godavari and obedient and humble Lakshmana followed him with a pitcher along with Janaki.

On his way Lakshmana said, "O sweet one! the season that is dear to you has come. The year seems to have been adorned by it.¹ The skin has become rough with dews, the earth is full of crops, water is difficult to touch, fire is agreeable. By this time, the people in order to take new rice perform a sacrifice known as the Aग्रहयान for the satisfaction of the gods and dead ancestors. There is plenty of eatables in the country, and there is no scarcity of milk and articles prepared from it. Princes bent upon conquests reconnoitre the ground now. The sun's motion is now to the south. The northern quarter now looks shorn of beauty, like a woman without the scarlet mark² on her brow. The Himalayas being by nature the home of snow have now

1 *Tilaka*—by way of decoration, on the forehead of a woman—a circular red mark made by some unguent substance between the two brows.

2 The season *Hemanta* corresponds to early winter.

justified its name, having the sun at a greater distance. The midday sun appears to be agreeable and none feels fatigued by a journey, only shade and water are unbearable now. The sun's glare has diminished, dews fall in profusion, the forest has become lonesome, and the lotuses have been destroyed by the frost. Now, the nights are always grey with frost, nobody can now lie in an uncovered place, the hours of night are long and they can only be measured by the sight of the constellation of Pushya. The splendour of the moon has fallen to the sun and the lunar disc is now always enveloped in mists, like a mirror (when breathed upon) grown misty by the vapour of breath. The shine of the full moon appears dim through frost, like Sita grown pallid by heat. The western breeze has become intensely cold. The whole forest is covered with a veil of mist, and wheat and barley crops look beautiful in the sun with cranes and *kraunchis* in them. Golden paddy with their ears slightly bent with grains have grown brownish-yellow like dates. Its rays being diffused through mists, the midday sun appears like the moon. In the morning, the sun's rays are feeble and yellow, and they look highly beautiful when they fall on the green grass wet with dews. Look, how thirsty elephants draw out their trunks at the touch of cold water. Ducks, cranes and swans and such other aquatic fowls, though they have arrived on the bank of the stream, do not dip in the water, as the crow does not enter a field of battle. The flowerless woods being enveloped with frosty mists at night and with dews in the morning, seem to be buried in sleep. The water of the river is enveloped in dense fog, and the sands of the river-banks are wet.

with dews. The presence of the aquatic birds is inferred through the mists only from their cries. Water everywhere, due to the fall of snow and mildness of the sunshine, is cold and sweet to drink. The lotuses have been destroyed by the forest, only their stalks remain, but their pollens, petals and pericarps have fallen, there is no more of their former beauty. Arya ! by this time, virtuous Bharata is practising greater asceticism at Nandigram, being overwhelmed with sorrow for his deep brotherly love for you. He has discarded the throne and all things of luxury and does live on frugal meals and lie on the bare ground. Perhaps, by the time, Bharata too is bathing in the Sarayu, being surrounded by his people. Bharata is noble, truthful, religious, of subdued senses and of sweet speech. He is beautiful. His arms are long, reaching up to the knees, his eyes are lotus-like, waist lean, and his colour is of soft green. That lotus-eyed hero has forsaken all pleasures of life and has clung fast to you. Though not living in the forest, he is leading an ascetic life (in the city). He will surely secure heavenly bliss. It is said that a man resembles his mother in qualities, but it is otherwise with Bharata. Alas ! how Kaikeyi, whose husband was Dasaratha and whose son is Bharata, could be so cruel ?”

Rama could not bear any aspersion against Kaikeyi and said :

“My boy ! you may talk of Bharata, the lord of the Ikshwaku race, but do not blame mother Kaikeyi. Though I am firm in my resolve, but love for Bharata makes me unsteady. I do often remember his sweet, delightful words sweet as manna. Lakshmana, I know not when I shall again meet Bharata and others !”

Rama, after expressing his grief in those words, bathed in the Godavari with Lakshmana and Janaki. Then they performed *Tarpan*s in honour of the gods and to the manes of the ancestors, and then they said their prayers to the sun and the gods. As God Rudra after bath looks beautiful with Nandi and Parvati, so Rama looked beautiful after his bath. They then returned to their cottage after performing their morning services.

CHAPTER V

SURPANAKHA

Honoured by the hermit, Rama was seated with Janaki in the cottage. At that time he looked like the moon in conjunction with the star Chitra, and was talking with Lakshmana on various things. At that time a Rakshashi was wandering leisurely there. She was Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana—the lord of the Rakshasas.

On arriving there the Rakshashi beheld beautiful Rama, dark as a blue lotus, with lotus-eyes, endowed with royal splendour whose personal beauty was like that of Cupid, who was mighty like Indra, wore matted locks and possessed the gait of an elephant. The Rakshashi was at once smitten with love. (But lo the contrast!) Rama had a graceful countenance whereas the Rakshashi had a hedious one; Rama's waist was lean, but she had a bulky abdomen; Rama had an elegant head of hair, whereas she had coppery locks; Rama's voice was sweet, but hers was grating; Rama was young, she was old; Rama was gentle, she was fierce; Rama was righteous, but she was vicious; Rama had mellifluous accents, but her words were harsh! In a

word, Rama was beautiful, she was hedious. But being maddened with desire, the Rakshasi asked, "I find matted locks on your head and bow and arrows in your hands ; tell me why you have come in the guise of a hermit with your wife to this region of the Rakshasas ?"

Then Rama with his usual candour related to her everything. He said, "There was a mighty king by the name of Dasaratha. I am his eldest son, and my name is Rama. He is Lakshmana, my younger brother, he is greatly attached to me. She is my wife named Janaki. I have come to live in the forest in obedience to the wishes of my father and mother. Now tell me who art thou ? Whose daughter are you and in what family are born ? You seem to be a Rakshasi from your form. However, why have you come hither ?"

Then Surpanakha smitten with lust replied, "I am Surpanakha, I can assume different forms at my will and range about the forest by striking terror into everybody's heart. You might have heard of Ravana, the lord of the Rakshasas, he is my brother ; and supremely powerful Kumbhakarna who is subject to long sleep, and pious Bibhishana, inimical to the Rakshasas, and formidable Khara and Dushana are also my brothers. But I have even surpassed them by my prowess. Rama, you are beautiful and I have fallen in love at the very first sight. I possess wonderful powers and can go wherever I wish. I ask you to be my husband for ever. What will you then do with Sita ? Sita is deformed and ugly, and she is in no way worthy of you. It is I who am worthy of you, so look upon me as your wife. This woman, Sita—I shall devour her immediately along

with Lakshmana. You will therefore be free to roam about the forest with me at your will."

Thereupon Rama with a playful smile addressing Surpanakha, began in jest :

"O worshipful lady, I am married. This Sita is my wife, and she is always with me. A co-wife will surely be highly disagreeable to a woman like you. Here is my younger brother, valiant Lakshmana. He is good-natured and beautiful and is leading a life of celibacy. He is quite ignorant of conjugal felicity, so he is desirous of taking a wife unto him ; for your beauty, this young man is, no doubt, worthy of you in every respect. O large-eyed beauty, receive him as your husband, as the sun's rays seek for the Sumeru mountain. If you be his wife you would not have any fear of a co-wife."

Surpanakha instantly left Rama and addressing herself to Lakshmana said, "Beautiful as you are, I am the only worthy spouse of you. Now accept me as your wife. You will live happily with me in the Dandaka forest."

Then eloquent Lakshmana with a smiling countenance gracefully replied, "You see, I am myself a servant, what will you gain being my wife ? Will you be content to live like a maid-servant ? Ah, my red¹ beauty, I am under worshipful Rama, be therefore the younger wife of Rama, your desires will be fulfilled and you will pass your days in happiness. He will surely accept you by discarding that ugly, unchaste and lean, old hag. O paragon of beauty, what intelligent man can remain addicted to a woman by neglecting such supreme grace ?"

1 One of the hue of a red lotus.

Hideous-looking Surpanakha, however, could not understand the joke and took Lakshmana's words to be serious, and thereupon, under the intoxication of lust, she said to Rama, "You are not showing me any affectionate regard by discarding that ugly, lean, old hag of unchaste character. So I shall devour her in your presence and shall enjoy supreme felicity by getting rid of the co-wife."

Saying this, the Rakshasi, red as a burning cinder, rushed towards gazelle-eyed Janaki in extreme wrath, as if a huge meteor rushed towards the Rohini star. Thereupon heroic Rama, preventing the Rakshasi, terrible as the noose of death, spoke to Lakshmana in wrath, "My boy! henceforth never crack jokes with a low-bred woman. Look, Janaki is half dead with fear. Punish her immediately by deforming this hedious and infuriated Rakshasi."

Thus being spoken to, powerful Lakshmana in great anger drew his sword and in the presence of Rama chopped off the ears and nose of Surpanakha. The Rakshasi was drenched in blood and burst into terrible yells, like the rumblings of a thunder-cloud, and ran away into the thick of the forest with up-raised arms.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST CLASH

Surpanakha then appeared before her brother Khara in Janasthana who was seated surrounded by the Rakshasas, and she fell on the ground like a bolt from the blue.

Thereupon, Khara of fierce energy seeing her lying on the ground and drenched in blood asked in rage,

"Rise up. Banish your fears and amazement. Tell me who has deformed your beauty? Who has hurt the black snake by his digital end, that was lying harmless? The miscreant, through ignorance, does not know that he has unknowingly drunk deadly poison and that death's noose lies round his neck. You are yourself formidable and can assume different forms at will, now tell me where had you been? Who has disgraced you thus? Who is so powerful among the gods, Gandharvas, Spirits and the *Rishis*? I don't find anybody in the three worlds that would dare injure you. However, as a thirsty swan drinks only milk mixed with water leaving the latter, so among the gods I shall pick out and kill thousand-eyed Indra. Whose frothy blood mother-earth desires to drink, his marrow being pierced by my arrows? Upon whose corpse the ravenous birds want to feed tearing the flesh? None amongst the gods and the Gandharvas will be able to protect that wretched whom I shall attack. Sister, shake off the stupor by degrees. Tell me, who is that despicable creature that humbled you in the forest by his prowess?"

Then Surpanakha said with tearful eyes, "Two sons of king Dasaratha live in the Dandaka forest. Their names are Rama and Lakshmana. They are young, beautiful and valiant. Their eyes are long like the petals of a lotus and they are clad in barks and black deer-skins. They live on fruits and roots and lead an ascetic life. They look like the king of the Gandharvas and bear regal signs on their persons. I can't say whether these two brothers are gods or demons. I have seen a perfect beauty decked in ornaments in their company, and for her they have mal-treated me. Now I

desire to drink the warm blood of that crooked woman and of the two brothers, and you will have to satisfy my desire."

After Surpanakha's speech, Khara in extreme rage summoned fourteen formidable Rakshasas, terrible as death, and addressing them said, "Lo! two armed youngmen, clad in barks and deer-skin have entered the Dandaka forest with a woman in their company. Kill those men along with that wicked woman. My sister has resolved to drink their blood today. Go now and accomplish the task by your valour. She will drink their blood in delight."

At this command of Khara, the Rakshasas were swiftly despatched with Surpanakha like clouds driven by a gale.

On arriving at the hermitage Surpanakha pointed out Rama and Lakshmana together with Sita.

Rama, seeing the Rakshasas, said to heroic Lakshmana:

"Remain with Sita just for a short time, let me destroy the Rakshasas that have come with Surpanakha."

"As you please," replied Lakshmana.

Rama then strung his bow wrought in gold, and addressing the Rakshasas said, "Hear me. We are sons of king Dasaratha and have come to the Dandaka forest with Sita. We live upon fruits and roots and lead an ascetic life. Why do you bear malice against us? You are thoroughly vicious and tyrannic over the hermits, and at their request I have taken up this bow for your destruction. Stand there where you are; advance not a step further. If you have any love for life then go back."

Thereupon, those fierce Rakshasas, the destroyers of the Brahmanas, with red-hot eyes, said to Rama, whose valour they had not witnessed as yet, "You have provoked our noble lord, Khara; you will have to lay down your life in today's fight. You are alone whereas we are many, not to speak of any fight but what power do you possess that you can stand before us? This day, surely you will have to give up your arms, being vanquished by our lances."

With these words the Rakshasas with their weapons rushed in fury towards him and threw their fourteen lances at Rama. Thereupon, invincible Rama cut off their darts with his golden shafts and in great rage took up from the quiver sharp Naracha arrows, whetted on stone and glittering like the sun's rays, and discharged them at the Rakshasas, as Indra hurls the thunderbolt. Those shafts after penetrating the hearts of the Rakshasas entered the earth, like snakes into an ant-hill. The Rakshasas gave up their ghosts and fell prostrate like cut-down trees. At that sight, Surpanakha whose bleeding had ceased a little, but from whose wounds blood was still oozing out like gum exuding from a tree, ran to Khara and began to cry bitterly.

Khara, seeing his sister again coming to him as if presaging some evil, broke forth in anger, "I deputed formidable Rakshasas living on flesh, on your behalf, why have you then come again and why weep so bitterly? Those are my trusted followers and wish me always good, and nobody can kill them by violent attack. It is not possible that they have not carried out my orders. Then why are you crying saying, 'Ah! My Lord!' Why are you rolling in the dust like a (crushed)

snake ? I am eager to know the cause. Arise, don't cry any more."

Irrepressible Surpanakha at these consolations of Khara, wiping off her tearful eyes replied, "When I first came to you with my lopped off nose and ears, you consoled me by despatching with me fourteen fierce Rakshasas, but they were all instantly killed by the heart-penetrating arrows of Rama. I have been greatly alarmed at this astonishing feat of Rama. Hence I have again come to you for shelter. To speak the truth, I see terror all round me. Now, if you have any commiseration for the Rakshasas, root out that thorn of the Rakshasas living in the Dandaka forest. He is my bitter foe. If you cannot exterminate him, I shall give up my life even in your presence. Meseems that you won't be able to stand before him, even if you face him with your army on the field of battle. You have the vanity of being valiant, though you are not so. Ah, you are a stain to our line ! Leave Janasthana with your friends without any delay. If you cannot slay these two puny men, then you must be weak, how can you then live here ? In short, you yourself will be soon destroyed by Rama's valour. Dasaratha's son Rama is exceedingly powerful, his brother Lakshmana too is quite formidable. Look, how I have been disfigured."

Huge-bellied Surpanakha thus lamenting before Khara was overwhelmed with grief and began to cry beating her abdomen repeatedly.

CHAPTER VII

WRATH OF KHARA

Khara being thus insulted in the presence of the Rakshasas, addressing her in angry words, said, "Sister, I have been greatly offended by this taunt of yours. This insult is unbearable like salt administered to a wound. Rama is a frail human being. I do not count him at all in my valour. He will die this day at my hand for his misdeeds. Now restrain your tears. Don't be frightened any more. I shall despatch Rama along with Lakshmana to the abode of Death. Drink his blood when he will fall by my axe." Being delighted with these words of her brother she began to praise Khara again through her levity. Then Khara being first reprimanded and then praised by Surpanakha said to Dushana, the captain of his army, "Brother! call those fierce Rakshasas who are invincible in war, and those who revel in cruelly injuring the people, those who always carry out my wishes and those who look like dark clouds. Fetch also my wonderful scimitar, sharp *Sakti*, and yoke the horses to my chariot. I shall march in the van for the destruction of wicked Rama."

Then at Dushana's directions, horses of different hues were yoked to the chariot, glittering as the sun, and high as the Sumeru peak. Its wheels were made of gold, and its pole was wrought in *Vaidurya* gem and covered with a net-work of gold, and ornamental designs of fish, flowers, trees, hills, auspicious birds, of the sun, the moon and the stars in gold decorated the chariot, and in the car at one place arms were kept. Khara in wrath got upon the chariot. Seeing this, formidable Rakshasas holding mighty arms and banners

surrounded the car. Seeing them Khara said in war-delight, "Don't delay any more. March quick to the field of battle."

Thereupon, fourteen thousand Rakshasas with swords, lances, axes, mallets, Pattish, Shulas, sharp axes, wheels, burning Tomaras, dreadful Parighas, huge bows, maces, clubs, and arms resembling thunderbolts, being thus equipped for war began to follow after Khara's car. Then with Khara's permission, the charioteer began to drive the car at violent speed. The deep rumbling noise of the car filled the air.

Powerful Khara, dreadful like death, began to urge in a thundering voice his charioteer to drive fast to kill his enemies in the battle.

At that time, a sable cloud, dark as an ass, began to shower blood upon the Rakshasas with a dreadful noise, as a sign of evil omen. The beautiful horses of Khara began to tumble down on the road that was strewn with flowers. A dark circle with a red rim was seen near the sun. A huge vulture suddenly attacked the royal standard and perched upon it. Ravenous birds and beasts began to make a clamorous noise and inauspicious jackals proceeded towards the south howling fearfully, thus indicating evil to the Rakshasas.

The sky became overcast with huge black clouds, like elephants emitting intoxicating virus from their temples. Thick darkness enveloped the forest, and nothing could be discerned in that pitch darkness, not even different directions. Suddenly, the evening appeared as if clad in a cloth soaked in blood! Carnivorous beasts and birds began to utter shrill cries even in the presence of Khara. The jackals began to howl

by gaping wide the red cavity of their mouths, as if belching forth fire towards the Rakshasas. Suddenly, a huge comet was seen approaching the sun and the sun became dim and suffered from eclipse, though it was not the time of eclipse. Heavy gales began to blow, and meteors like glow-worms fell from the sky during the day time. The lotuses in the tank became withered, fishes and aquatic creatures went underneath the water. The forest was covered with dusts even without a storm and the parrots began to utter piteous cries. The earth and the forest began to shake with a terrific din. Khara was then roaring in his car, but suddenly his left arm began to throb, his eyes became wet, his voice sank and he was seized with a terrible headache! But Khara did not pay any heed to all these through foolishness.

Seeing these ominous portents on all sides, that are sufficient to make one's hairs stand on their ends, Khara addressing his soldiers said with a laugh, "I do not care for all these portents, as the strong do not care for the weak. I shall bring down the stars by my sharp arrows on the ground, and shall not return without slaying haughty Rama and Lakshmana in battle. Let my sister, for whose sake their senses were so much perverted, be satisfied by drinking their blood. I have never been defeated in battle, and you have witnessed that repeatedly. Now, to speak of these two puny men, if I be enraged I may slay even Indra, the wielder of the thunderbolt in the field of battle."

Hearing this speech, the doomed soldiers of Khara displayed their great delight. At that time the Gandharvas, Siddhas and the Charanas were stationed

in the sky and they said amongst themselves, "Let victory attend the cows, Brahmanas and those who are held in esteem by the world. Let Rama conquer these rovers of the night as Vishnu with discus conquered the Asuras in yore."

During that time the celestials were talking amongst themselves. Khara pressed forward with great impetuosity and Shyena-gami, Prithugriva, Jajna-satru, Vihangama, Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalkamuka, Meghmali, Mahamali, Varashya, Rudhirashan—these twelve chiefs went with him. Mahakapal, Sthulaksha, Pramatha and Trishira followed Dushana. As the planets move towards the sun and the moon, so the fierce Rakshasa army rushed towards Rama and Lakshmana in lust of battle.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENGAGEMENT

When fierce Khara came near the hermitage, seeing all sorts of disturbances and evil portents round him; Rama became sad¹ thinking of the ill-fate of the Rakshasas and addressing Lakshmana said, "Look, Lakshmana, all these dark omens presage destruction to the Rakshasas. Dark clouds are raining blood! Wild birds are uttering piteous shrieks. And my shafts are flaming in war-delight and my gold-plated bow is throbbing with restless energy. Our victory is sure and the Rakshasas are doomed. A severe conflict is imminent. My right arm is throbbing repeatedly,

1 To feel for one's enemy rushing unwittingly to the brink of ruin is indeed divine. This is a note-worthy trait in Rama's character.—Translator.

and your face too appears to be beaming with delight. When the faces of those that are engaged in a battle, grow pallid, it forebodes that their end is near. Hark ! the Rakshasas are blowing their trumpets. It is the duty of the sagacious people to take precautions before they are actually faced with any danger. Therefore, take shelter with Janaki in some inaccessible crag screened by dense shrubs and creepers being equipped with bows and arrows. I request you to hide there soon. I don't wish that you should act otherwise, you are a hero and I doubt not that you can slay these Rakshasas by your valour, but I wish to kill them myself."

Thereupon, Lakshmana taking bow and arrows entered a cave with Sita. Rama being satisfied with Lakshmana's action put on a flaming armour and thereupon shone like a column of fire in the midst of darkness, and began to resound the quarter with the twangs of bow and patiently waited for the advent of the Rakshasas.

The celestials, eager to witness the issue of the fight thronged in the sky and prayed for Rama's victory.

By and by the Rakshasa hordes were seen on all sides. Some were shouting, some were talking, some were jumping in anticipation of victory, some were yawning and some were blowing their trumpets. A terrible, deafening noise filled the forest, and wild beasts ran to secluded quarters. Then the vast Rakshasa army, like a sea, made its way for Rama. And Rama too skilled in warfare advanced to meet the host casting careful glances all round. When he met Khara's army,

Rama stretched his formidable bow and swiftly took up shafts from the quiver and in his rage he became quite incapable of being looked at like the Doomsday-fire. On all sides stood the Rakshasas holding bows and other arms in their hands, with their blazing armours and various ornaments and they appeared like a mass of blue clouds at sunrise.

Khara in front of his army got sight of Rama near the hermitage. At this, he asked his charioteer to drive towards Rama, and the charioteer drove the car where Rama stood alone. Shyena-gami and others roared at the sight of Khara who then shone like Mars in the midst of a cluster of stars, and then striking broad-chested Rama with hundreds of shafts began to roar in battle with delight. Other Rakshasas in the meantime hurled various weapons at Rama, and they began to shower their missiles on him, as if a huge cloud was raining over a firm mountain-peak. Then Rama encircled by the Rakshasas looked like God Siva surrounded by the ghosts and spirits in the evening twilight.

Rama began to ward off their blows and weapons. As the mountain is not shaken by a thunderbolt, so Rama was not moved by their striking but being pierced with arrows his whole body became covered with blood, and then he looked like the evening sun surrounded by red clouds.

After this, Rama bent his bow into a semi-circle and began to discharge arrows at ease, and those dreadful shafts, effective as Death, shone as tongues of flame in the sky. A number of Rakshasas were slain by them. Heroic Rama by his shafts cut down bows, shields,

armours, flag-staffs, and arms of the Rakshasas. Horses, elephants with their riders were struck down by his arrows. The infantry fell in number. As dry wood is consumed by fire, so the Rakshasas were scorched and overwhelmed by Rama's arrows. The Rakshasas in fury hurled their lances and axes at Rama, but Rama warded them off; the Rakshasas being smitten by Rama's arrows ran to Khara for protection.

Dushana assuaged their fear and advanced to meet Rama with bow in hand. The fight renewed in great fury, and the Rakshasas hurled all their maces, stones and stocks at Rama. At this, Rama in anger aimed a flaming Gandharva weapon at the Rakshasas. Innumerable shafts issued from his bow. The sky was covered with his arrows. The Rakshasas were struck with wonder at his quickness. They could not ascertain when he took his shafts from his quiver and when he discharged them from his bow. They only witnessed a continual shower of shafts and it infested the sky like the rays of the sun. The ground was covered with the corpses of the Rakshasas. Some were dead, some were on the point of death, some were rolling in agony in the dust and they were rending the sky with their terrible yells. The battle-field became strewn with heads decorated with turbans, arms with various ornaments and gloves, with cut-down limbs, umbrellas, chowris, flags, chariots, dead horses, elephants and broken arms. Dushana finding the army scattered by Rama's shafts asked five thousand fierce Rakshasas to charge. They never turned their back on the field of battle, and their impetuous charge was quite tremendous. At Dushana's command they began to shower their missiles on Rama. Rama

warded off all their blows and stood there like a bull with half-closed eyes (as if quite unconcerned). The slayer of foes, Dushana began to cut down Rama's arrows. At this, Rama grew highly enraged and cut down his bow with a razor-like shaft, four horses with four shafts, and fell down the head of the charioteer with a crescent-shaped arrow and pierced his heart with three arrows. Thereupon, Dushana took up a formidable Parigha;¹ it was plated with gold, studded with sharp iron *sankus* (pikes) and moistened with the fat of his foes, and with it he rushed towards Rama. At this, Rama with two shafts cut down his two arms with their ornaments and protecting gloves. Instantly, the huge Parigha rolled down like a broken flag-staff of the banner of Indra, and Dushana himself fell down on earth like an elephant whose two tusks have been broken down. At this, powerful Mahakapal, Sthulaksha, Pattisha and Pramathi rushed towards Rama with their axes. Heroic Rama received those doomed generals with his sharp arrows as one receives at ease his guests. He cut down Mahakapal's head, crushed Pramathi, and Sthulaksha fell down like a lopped-off tree. Thus Rama destroyed in no time five thousand soldiers of Dushana.

Hearing this news Khara was greatly enraged and addressing his forces said, "You see, heroic Dushana has been destroyed with his five thousand soldiers by this wicked man. Now, kill that man with the help of your various weapons."

1. We have lost all clues as to the exact nature of the weapons used in former times. All that we know is about the bow and the arrow, but that was not all. There are descriptions of arms which correspond to the fire-arms of our time.—Translator.

Khara then rushed forward, and Shyena-gami, Prithugriva, Jainasatru, Viṅgama, Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalkamuka, Hemamali, Sarpashya, and Rudhirashana—these twelve generals—rushed towards Rama and began to shower their shafts on Rama. Rama then began to destroy their forces with arrows ornamented with diamond and gold. As the trees are destroyed by lightning, so his arrows resembling fire with smoke, wrought havoc amongst the Rakshasas. He slew hundreds and thousands of them by the Kirnas, and the Rakshasas being smitten by his arrows covered the earth with their bleeding bodies. As the Rakshasas fell with their dishevelled hair, the battle-field appeared to be strewn with the Kusha grass, and the Dandaka forest for their stream of blood turned into a veritable hell.

Thus Rama on foot and alone destroyed fourteen thousand Rakshasas, and of the Rakshasas there only Khara and Trishira survived.

Khara, finding his troops thus destroyed, rushed towards Rama like Indra with his upraised thunderbolt. Thereupon, Trishira came near Khara and said, "O chief of the Rakshasas, I am a formidable warrior, you please refrain from going to the risks of a fight, but send me instead. I shall kill Rama, and I swear by my arms that I shall surely slay Rama in battle, capable of being destroyed by the Rakshasas. This day, either Rama will meet with his end at my hand, or I shall meet with mine at his. Just refrain for a moment from the fight, and be a witness to it. If Rama is killed, you will return to Janasthana with great delight, or if I die, go forward to meet him in battle."

At this, Khara said, "Then advance." At his word

Trishira instantly got upon a resplendent chariot yoked with horses and rushed forward like a hill with three peaks and after showering arrows on Rama like a raining cloud, he roared in exultation in a voice as deep as that of a wet kettle-drum. Rama began to rain his shafts incessantly on Trishira. Then the two fought like a lion and an elephant against each other. Trishira discharged three arrows aiming at Rama's brow. Thereupon, Rama grew exceedingly angry and said, "Ah, is this your might? Your arrows have struck my forehead like shafts of flower. Now bear my darts."

Saying this, Rama in rage pierced Trishira's heart with fourteen snake-like arrows, then with four bent shafts he brought down the four horses and with eight shafts the charioteer of Trishira and cut down his lofty standard by one arrow. Trishira then wanted to get down but Rama with three arrows in extreme rage cut down three heads of Trishira. And the Rakshasa instantly fell down emitting reeking blood on the field of battle.

Seeing Trishira thus fallen, the remnants of the army ran away in fear from the field, just as a flock of deer quickly runs away at the sight of a hunter.

Khara was greatly alarmed at Trishira's death and by the destruction of his troops which Rama effected quite single-handed. He was distressed and was seized with great despondency and fear.

CHAPTER IX

DEATH OF KHARA

Then Khara in great despair rushed towards Rama violently twanging his bow and repeatedly discharging from it *Narachas* like blood-thirsty, angry snakes, as in the days of yore Namuchi rushed after Indra, or as the Rahu runs after the moon. He repeatedly twang the string of his bow and moved about the field of battle by displaying his skill in arms. Rama too covered the sky with irresistible arrows, glowing as sparks of fire. The shafts of the two heroes cut off the sun's rays. It was a deadly fight, each of the heroes tried their utmost to kill his opponent. As the driver strikes the elephant with the goad, so Khara struck Rama with *Nalikas*, *Narachas* and sharp *Vikirnas*. Khara was then seated in his chariot, and at that time he looked like Death himself holding the noose in his hand. Rama was then fatigued on account of his fight with *Rakshasa* hosts, yet Khara considered him to be formidable. And as the lion is never afraid of shy deer, so lion-like Rama was not at all frightened at the sight of Khara.

Gradually, Khara came near Rama as a moth is drawn by the glare of the flame, and with great lightness of hand cut down the bow of Rama with the arrow fixed on it, just at the place where it was grasped. Then in great rage he discharged seven arrows like thunderbolt which after severing the joints of Rama's armour struck his person. Thereupon Khara roared in heroic pride.

At this, the armour slipped from Rama's person and in his rage he shone like a burning flame. Rama then took up the formidable *Vaishnavi* bow producing a deep rumbling noise, given by *Agastya*, and rushed

and Dushana with fourteen thousand Rakshasas. Wonderful is his valour ! What great fortitude he has displayed like Vishnu !" Saying this they went to their respective abodes.

After this, the ascetic saints headed by Agastya came to greet Rama in joy and addressing Rama, said, "My boy, this was why Indra came to the scared hermitage of Sharabhanga and this was the reason for which the hermits brought you here under the plea of seeing the sacred *ashramas*. Henceforth, we shall live safely in the Dandaka forest."

After the heroic Lakshmana issuing from the mountain fastness with Janaki greeted Rama in great delight. Rama being honoured for this victory entered the hermitage. Then Janaki with moonlike beautiful face saw that all the Rakshasas had been slain and Rama was safe. Her heart was filled with delight and she embraced him again and again.

CHAPTER X

THE MESSAGE

In that great fight only one Rakshasa named Akampana survived; he hurriedly left Janasthana and appeared before Ravana and delivered the message saying, "O king, the Rakshasas of Janasthana with Khara have been killed. I have alone with extreme difficulty somehow managed to come here."

As soon as Ravana heard this from Akampana's lips he burst forth in red-hot eyes, as if scorching everything by the fire of his rage, "Akampana, who being desirous of death has destroyed Janasthana ? Who is to exit from this world ? I am Death of Death; even Indra,

Kuvera, Yama and Vishnu can't be safe by doing any injury to me. In my anger I can destroy Death itself, can burn Fire, can resist the course of Wind and can reduce the Sun and the Moon into ashes by my energy." Thereupon, Akampana with joined hands asked for protection in faltering accents and after receiving his permission and assurance said :

"O king, there is a warrior named Rama, son of Dasaratha. He is young, beautiful and of lustrous, green hue. He has mighty, well-shaped arms, and high and broad shoulders. His valour is quite peerless. This Rama has killed Khara and Dushana in Janasthana."

At these words, Ravana began to breathe heavily like a serpent and asked, "Has Rama come to Janasthana with Indra and other gods?"

Akampana replied, "O lord of the Rakshasas, Rama is the foremost of the bowmen and possesses celestial arms. He has got a younger brother named Lakshmana. He too is equally powerful. His face is beautiful like the full-moon and his voice is deep like the rumbling of a tambour.

"Rama is united with Lakshmana, as fire is strengthened by the wind. He is king of kings, and know it that none of the gods have come with him. His shafts, as soon as they were discharged, began to devour the Rakshasas like a five-mouthed serpent, and wherever the Rakshasas fled in fear, they found Rama stationed before them. In truth, this hero alone has ruined your Janasthana."

Ravana replied, "Akampana, I shall immediately start for Janasthana for the destruction of Rama and Lakshmana."

Akampana said, "My lord, listen to me what I have to say about Rama's valour. When that hero is enraged, there is none who can resist his prowess in battle. He can turn the course of a flowing river, can bring down the stars and planets from the sky, and raise the submerged earth by his arrows. He can resist the current of the ocean, the course of wind, can overflow the land by breaking the shores, and can destroy all creatures and create them anew. As it is difficult to attain heaven, so it will be difficult for you to defeat him with all the Rakshasas. He is incapable of being slain by the gods or the Asuras, but I tell you of a device for his destruction. Please listen to me with attention. He has got a beautiful wife called Sita. She is in her bloom of youth and gracefully adorned with ornaments. Her beauty strikes every one with deep wonder; she is indeed a jewel among women. Not to speak of a human being, no goddess, no nymph, no Gandharvi, no Pannagi is equal to her in beauty. Somehow enchant Rama in the forest and then carry away Sita. It is sure, Rama will not survive the separation of his wife."

Ravana approved of the proposal and after a moment's reflection said, "Akampana, I shall start even this morning alone taking with me my charioteer only, and return with Sita to the city of Lanka in great triumph."

Saying this, Ravana proceeded in a shining car yoked with asses and it shone like the moon in the sky among a mass of clouds.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT WAR LORD

After crossing a long distance Ravana arrived at the abode of Maricha, the son of Taraka.

Maricha himself received Ravana and offered him a seat and water to wash his feet, and treated him with rare meats and drinks. He then asked, "O king, is everything well with the rovers of night? I have great misgivings in my mind seeing you alone coming here in such great haste."

Thereupon Ravana replied, "Rama has slain the indestructible Rakshasas of Janasthana with their leaders. I shall now carry away his wife, just help me in this undertaking."

Hearing these words of Ravana, Maricha said, "O Lord of the Rakshasas! tell me who is that enemy in the guise of a friend that has mentioned about Sita before you? Perhaps you insulted somebody, and he has inspired this evil intention in you. Who has advised you to run off with Sita? Who wishes to cut off the head of the Rakshasas? He is no doubt your greatest enemy who has incited you in this matter. He is trying to extract the fangs of a snake by your agency. Tell me who has induced you to this wicked course. You were happy, who has struck you on the head? Behold, Rama is like an infuriated elephant, his pure ancestry is his trunk, valour is his temporal sweat, two arms are his tusks. Not to speak of challenging him in a fight, you cannot even stare at him. Rama is like a formidable lion, his movements in the field of battle are his manes and joints. His duty is to destroy skilful

towards Khara, by fixing shafts provided with bent knots and golden feathers.

Rama at once cut down Khara's golden standard and it fell into pieces on the ground, as if the sun went down at the will of the gods. Thereupon, Khara in anger smote Rama's chest with four arrows. Thus being wounded Rama in rage discharged six arrows and pierced Khara's head with one shaft, his arms with two and with three crescent-shaped arrows his chest. After this, Rama took up thirteen sharp glittering *Narachas* and cut down the yoke of Khara's chariot, with one shaft, four horses with four shafts, the driver's head with one, and the *Trivenu* of the chariot with three, and two wheels with two arrows and his bow with one, and easily pierced Khara's body with another. Khara then being deprived of his bow, chariot and horses jumped down from his car, with a mace in his hand. Meanwhile, the gods above were greatly eulogising Rama for his valour.

Rama seeing Khara alighted on the ground with mace in his hand said with a gentle but a stern voice :

"Khara, you have done a despicable thing, being the leader of a great host with elephants and horses. He who is engaged in cruel and injurious acts towards others can hardly save himself even if he be the lord of the three worlds. Whose acts are against the interests of all—people crush him like a fell snake. As a Brahmin's wife, who unwisely eats hailstone¹ dies, so the people delight to see the end of him who through greed or lust becomes addicted to vice. What have you gained by

1 . A piece of ancient superstition.

killing the pious hermits of the Dandaka forest? He who is hateful, cruel and vicious soon meets with his fall, though rolling in wealth, like an uprooted tree. In fact; as the tree blooms in its season, so vice brings forth its evil consequences in due time. As one can immediately perceive the effect after taking poisonous food, so the evil consequences of sin can readily be perceived. O Rakshasa, I have come to the forest at the command of the king for the punishment of the vicious. These golden shafts of mine will penetrate your body and enter the earth like snakes. With your army you will follow the pious hermits whom you have killed in the forest. Those hermits in their chariots will witness you despatched to hell. You may now strike me as you like, do what you like, I will bring down your head today like a palmyra-fruit on the ground."

Hearing these words, Khara in red-hot eyes, broke forth with a laugh, "Rama! why do you boast? Why do you think so high of yourself by slaying the common Rakshasas? Those who are really heroic never boast of their own valour. It is only a vile and despicable Kshatriya like you that brags of his self. In the thick of fight who advertises about his own heroism by citing his pedigree? In fact, as a piece of brass, glittering like gold, betrays its inherent stain, being tested by fire prepared with husks, so you have betrayed your fickleness by your self-eulogy. Rama, don't you see me standing before you with my mace, like an immoveable mountain-peak variegated with minerals? I can destroy you and all others, like Death with this club of mine. I have many things yet to say, but I must refrain, as the sun will immediately go down, and

then there might be some interruption to the fight. You have killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas, I shall wipe the tears of their wives and children by killing you today."

Saying this, Khara threw his mace like a flaming thunderbolt at Rama. That mace of Khara began to burn trees and creepers into ashes. But Rama instantly cut that mace into pieces, and it fell on the ground like a snake deprived of its venom by the power of spell.

Then virtuous Rama said with a laugh, "Khara, you have given the utmost proof of your valour. Now, I find how inconsiderable is your might. You were so long bragging in vain. Look, your mace has been cut into pieces by my shafts. You are a humbug. You thought you would kill your enemy by that, but that belief is gone. You have just now said that you would wipe the tears of the friends and relations of the dead warriors, but that boast will prove to be idle. You are extremely wicked and mean. As the (bird) Garuda stole nectar so I shall rob you of your life. The earth will today drink your gore when your head will be severed by my arrows. You will then with lopped-off arms and a dusty body embrace the earth like a damsel difficult to win. When you will be buried in eternal sleep, the helpless hermits of Janasthana will freely roam about without any fear. This day, the hideous Rakshasis, frightful to look at, will run away with tearful eyes in distress, and those low-born women whose husband you are will be overwhelmed with grief. Ah, cruel wretch, it is through your fear that the ascetics could not perform their sacrifices freely."

Thereupon, Khara broke forth in harsh accents:

"In spite of real cause of fear you are indifferent. You are a braggart, and though your end is nigh, you have no control over your tongue. Those whose days are numbered, on account of their weak intellect cannot decide what is proper or what is improper."

Saying this, Khara pursed his lips and with an angry frown uprooted a Sala tree and then with a deep roar he hurled it against Rama, crying, "Rama, thou 'art doomed." Thereupon, heroic Rama cut down the tree with shafts and in rage resolved to kill Khara. The corners of his eyes became red with anger and he began to perspire all over the body. He began to discharge his arrows incessantly, and foaming blood flowed in torrents from Khara's wounded body. Being greatly smothered by Rama's arrows and rendered furious by the smell of blood, Khara rushed towards Rama in fury. Rama, seeing Khara thus coming towards him, stepped back two or three paces and took up an arrow blazing like fire given by Indra. As the giant Darkness¹ was reduced into ashes by the angry look of Rudra in the Sweta-forest, as Vritra fell struck by the thunderbolt, as Namuchi was slain with foam, or as Vala with thunder, so Khara fell being struck by the arrow.

At this, the gods above were struck with wonder. They showered flowers on Rama and beat their drums of victory in joy and said amongst themselves :

"Look, in what short time Rama has killed Khara

1 These Vedic stories are bold allegories of some notable astronomical or natural phenomena, as Vritra means a cloud and death of Vritra means clouds driven by the thunder. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of translating Andhakara Asura as giant Darkness.

This great warrior alone on foot killed Khara and Dushana with fourteen thousand formidable Rakshasas within three *Dandas* (an hour or so), and thus has protected the hermits and removed all dangers to the Dandaka forest. He has spared me because it is sinful to kill a woman.

"He has got a brother named Lakshmana. He is powerful, energetic, invincible and victorious like Rama and he is highly devoted to Rama, as if he is Rama's right hand and his second self. Rama's dear wife lives in their company. She is always engaged in doing good to her husband. Her eyes are drawn up to her ears, face is like the full moon and her hue is like that of polished gold. She is a perfect beauty. Her nose is beautiful, her hair glossy and her nails are well-shaped and of reddish tinge, her waist lean, hips heavy, breasts high and plump. She looks like the beauty of the forest and as the Goddess of Wealth. No goddess, no Gandharvi, no Kinnari, no Yakshi is like her. In a word, I have not seen such a woman on earth. That fortunate man whose wife she will be and whom she will embrace cheerfully, will be more long-lived than Indra in the worlds. Ravana, that good woman is worthy of you and you are worthy of her. It is for you that I wanted to carry her away, but cruel Lakshmana cut my nose and ears. To speak the truth, you will be agitated by the sight of her beauty. Now step forward for triumphal success. If you approve of what I have said, then throw yourself unhesitatingly into the undertaking. Considering that Rama and Lakshmana are quite helpless, proceed to secure Sita. I have narrated everything about the destruction of Khara and Dushana and

of the Rakshasas of Janasthana. Do what you think best under the circumstances."

Hearing this stirring tale from Surpanakha, Ravana held a deep consultation with his counsellors and after listening to their counsel he secretly entered his stable.

Entering the stable Ravana asked the charioteer to yoke the horses to his car, upon which the charioteer soon appeared with an excellent car. It was made of gold and ornamented with jewels. The car was adorned with spectral faces in gold. The chief of the Rakshasas, Ravana, got upon the car and proceeded with a deep rumbling noise like that of a cloud towards the Lord of waters. A white umbrella spread over his head, two white chowris were on his two sides and his body was adorned with ornaments. The great warrior looked quite splendid in beautiful dress. He was the great enemy of the gods and slayer of the *Rishis*. He had ten heads, twenty hands and his colour was like that of a blue gem. In his journey he appeared like a hill with ten peaks, or a cloud followed by a flock of cranes.

Gradually, Ravana arrived near the sea-beach. On arriving there, he found a range of hills and spacious abodes with lakes and tanks of crystal water. At one place there stood plantain and cocoanut trees and at another place stood Tals and Tamalas. Birds and snakes have taken their shelters in these places, and Kinnaras and Gandharvas were freely roving there. Great saints who have conquered their desires, Charanas, Vaikhanasha, Valkhilya, Aja, Asha, and Marichipa were engaged in religious meditation. Sportive nymphs and beautiful damsels of heaven wearing heavenly ornaments and garlands were sauntering in the place.

That was the haunt of the gods feeding on nectar and it was ever cool by the sea-breeze. There was plenty of Lapis Lazuli stone, and ducks, cranes, and frogs were ever croaking there. The amber cars decked with garlands of those who had attained heavenly region by their penance were also to be seen. There stood sandalwood—the source of sweet extract, Aguru, of excellent perfume, at one place stood Kokkala trees bearing sweet-scented fruits, at another place there were blossoms of Tamala, thickets of black pepper. Dried up heaps of conchs and corals were scattered here and there. There stood gold and silver mountains, somewhere flowed pleasant rills and fountains. There were cities crowded with horses, elephants and chariots, and full of grains, wealth and gems of women.

Ravana thus proceeded, breathing the pleasant sea-breeze and surveying all these things round him. In his way, he found a deep green Banyan tree under whose shade the hermits were absorbed in meditation. Mighty Garuda sat on one of its branches with a huge elephant and tortoise for his meal. As soon as he perched upon the branch, it gave way under his weight. Under its shade the saints named Vaikhanasha, Valkhilya, Aja, Marichipa and Dhumra were engaged in religious meditation. Garuda, out of compassion towards them, flew away in great speed holding with one claw the broken bough hundred Yojanas long, and the elephant and the tortoise in another, and after going a great distance he appeased his hunger by devouring those two huge animals. After that his strength was doubly increased and he became eager to steal nectar. Thereupon, he carried off nectar from well-guarded Indra's

palace, by breaking off the iron-net. Ravana found that Banyan tree called Subhadra standing on the sea-shore.

Then after crossing the ocean Ravana arrived at a beautiful asylum. There lived Maricha on frugal diet, clad in black deer-skin and wearing matted locks.

CHAPTER XIII

MARICHA AGAIN

Maricha received Ravana with due honours and offered him a seat and water to wash his feet and after offering him food worthy of gods, he questioned him with cogent words :

"Is everything well with Lanka? Why have you come here again?"

Ravana said, "Maricha, I am indeed in distress and you are my only help in difficulty. I shall immediately tell you everything that has happened, just listen to me.

"You know Janasthana where my brothers Khara, Dushana and my sister Surpanakha and carnivorous Trishira lived, and other Rakshasas also resided there under my directions. They were fourteen thousand in number and they could perform mighty deeds and were obedient to Khara. They always tyrannised over the virtuous ascetics of the forest. They were engaged in a fight with Rama, and that man—Rama, without exchanging any angry word, single-handed killed all those fourteen thousand Rakshasas. He has killed Khara, Dushana and Trishira and rendered the Dandaka forest free from all fears.

"Maricha, Rama who along with his wife has been angrily banished by his father, that week and the lowest

Rakshasa warriors like a flock of deer. Sharp sword is his teeth and arrows constitute his body. It is not proper for you to provoke that sleeping lion. Rama is like an ocean, the bow is its alligator, swing of his arms is its mud, heavy fight is its water, shafts are its billows. O king, it is not desirable to face that ocean. Be pacified and go back to Lanka. Live happily with your own wives and let Rama live in peace with Sita in the forest."

At these words of Maricha, Ravana departed for Lanka.

In the meantime, Surpanakha seeing the destruction of fourteen thousand fierce Rakshasas with Khara, Dushana and Trishira, yell l in grief and being greatly agitated by these tremendous feats of Rama came to Lanka, ruled by Ravana.

On arriving there, she saw Ravana effulgent like a column of fire, seated on a golden throne raised on a golden dias and his counsellors sat in front of him, as the gods surround the throne of Indra. The great hero with gaping mouth was dreadful to look at like Death itself. He had ten heads, twenty arms, wide mouth and ample chest. He bore all the royal signs on his person, his hue was like the mild shine of blue gem (Lapis Lazuli), his teeth were white. He wore gold ear-rings on his ears and was clad in elegant robes. The gods, spirits or saints could not defeat him in battle. He bore on his person the scars left by Indra's thunderbolt and by the discus of Vishnu and of other weapons in the war between the gods and the Asuras. The marks of striking by the tusks of Airavata were still visible on his breast. He could churn the ocean, uproot mountains, and crush

gods. He was the violator of others' wives, enemy to sacrifices, and forcibly took away Soma-drink from the place of sacrifice. This great hero after defeating Vasuki in the city of Bhogavati carried off Takshaka's darling wife. He brought Puspaka chariot defeating Kuvera, that could travel to any place at will ; in his anger he destroyed the heavenly Nandana garden and Chaitrarath forest and obstructed the course of the sun and the moon in the sky. This victorious hero formerly passed ten thousand years in religious meditation and pleased Brahma by offering his ten heads to him ; and on account of the boon received from Brahma he was devoid of any fear of death from Gandharvas, Pisachas, reptiles, birds and all creatures except man. A celestial garland hung round his neck. He was tall like a mountain, his eyes were large and bright. He was cruel, fierce, harsh, hater of the Vedas and the terror of all creatures.

Surpanakha, stupefied with fear, beheld such Ravana, her brother. Then Surpanakha in great anger broke forth before the councillors, "Ravana, you are wilful and intoxicated with lust, you don't know what great danger awaits you. People never honour a king who is greedy and is addicted to sensual pleasures, as they do not prize the fire of funeral pyre. The kingdom of the king who does not himself discharge his duties is doomed to ruin. The king who does not employ envoys and does not present himself in due time to his subjects and who has lost his independence,—people shun such a king from distance, as an elephant avoids mud of the river-bed. The king who is in the hands of his ministers and does not look after his kingdom, prosperity is never noticed in it like a rock submerged in the ocean. Ravana,

you are fickle, there is not a single spy in any part within your jurisdiction. Then how can you hope to rule in constant hostility to the gods, and Gandharvas and Danavas. You are foolish like a child, and you don't know even what is essential for you. How can you then hope to rule? The king, whose spies, treasury and policy are under another's control is no better than a common man. The kings who learn about their impending dangers through their spies are reputed to be far-sighted. But you have no spies and your councillors are mediocres; therefore you do not know about the destruction of Janasthana. Single-handed Rama has killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas and Khara and Dushana. He has given protection to the hermits of the Dandaka forest. You do not realise what great peril is impending over the State. This shows you are careless and have no independence. People do not help a king who is haughty, uncharitable and deceitful, even in difficulties. The king who is self-conceited and angry, is slighted by all and is destroyed even by his friends and relations in times of peril. Nobody does his work, nor anybody is afraid of him. That king is soon dethroned and becomes poor like a man of straw. Some useful purpose may be served even by dry woods, stones, or dust, but no useful purpose is served by a dethroned monarch. Like a piece of cloth that has been worn out, or like a trodden garden the king who has been deprived of his suzerainty becomes useless even though competent. But nothing concerning the kingdom is unknown to him who is careful, virtuous, grateful and has presence of mind and there is no possibility of his fall. The king sleeps with his eyes shut, but is ever

awake in his policy and one can incite his pleasure or anger, so he is never slighted anywhere. Ravana, since you are ignorant of the destruction of the Rakshasas, it proves you are most foolish and do not possess all these qualities. You never care for anybody. You do not realise situation¹ of anything. You are quite incapable of discerning between virtues and vices. The ruin of your kingdom is therefore inevitable."

Haughty Ravana, the lord of untold riches, hearing of his vices from Surpanakha's lips, was plunged in deep thoughts.

CHAPTER XII

RAVANA ROUSED

Thereafter, Ravana in great anger asked Surpanakha, "My darling, who is Rama? What is his prowess? How he looks? Why has he come to the inaccessible Dandaka forest? What is the nature of the weapons with which the Rakshasas were slain and who has disfigured you?"

Thereupon, Surpanakha angrily replied, "Ravana, Rama is beautiful like Cupid, his arms are long, eyes large, and he is clad in bark and deer-skin. He discharges *Narachas* like deadly venomous snakes by bending his bow, furnished with gold rings, and that looks like the rainbow—the bow of Indra. He is so quick in the field of battle that nobody can discern when he takes up the arrows and when he discharges them or when he bends his bow. As Indra destroys crops by hailstorms, so only the destruction of troops is noticed and nothing else.

1. In the original "you have no idea of time and place."

of the Kshatriyas, has destroyed all the **Rakshasas**. He is vile, crooked and haughty and fearless, **greedy** and of bad character. He has no religion and does always evil to others. That stupid fellow without any provocation forcibly cut my sister Surpanakha's nose and ears. Now, I intend to carry his wife Sita by force to my abode. Please help me in that undertaking. O hero, if you be on my side along with brother Kumbhakarna and others, I am not afraid of the gods. You are most competent, come to my assistance. There is none equal to you in might, in resourcefulness or in devising means; you are a warrior and a wizard. Uncle, it is for this reason that I have come to you, and first hear what you will have to do for me. Assuming the form of a golden deer with silver spots frisk about Sita. At your sight, Sita will surely induce Rama and Lakshmana for securing you. Then, when those two will be out on that mission, I shall easily carry away Sita, as the Rahu steals the moon-shine at ease. Rama will be greatly weakened by the separation of Sita and then I shall succeed in destroying him easily.

Maricha's face grew dark as he heard Ravana's words. He was greatly alarmed by the proposal and being almost half-dead sucked his dry lips and stared at him with winkless eyes. Afterwards, Maricha for the good of Ravana as well as for his safety sorrowfully began :

"O king, there is no dearth of men who will always speak sweet words, but rare is the speaker of unpleasant but wholesome truths, so rare is he who is inclined to listen to it. You are fickle and since you have no spies, you do not know Rama looking like

Indra and powerful as Varuna. If he does not destroy all the Rakshasas in his anger, it will be good enough to us. Sita has been born for your destruction and you will be soon in great trouble on account of her. You are highly wileful and Lanka under your rule will come to ruin. A king who is wicked and wileful like you, soon meets with his end and with his kingdom, friends and relations.

"My boy, Rama has not been cast off by his father, and don't consider him as greedy, disreputable, haughty or the meanest of the Kshatriyas. He is virtuous and wishes good to everybody. He has come to the forest for fulfilling the pledge of his father, deceived by Kaikeyi. It is for their good that he has come to the Dandaka forest discarding kingdom and royal luxury. Ravana, Rama is neither wicked nor stupid, nor under the sway of his senses. Falsehood never attaches to him. So it is not proper for you to talk about him in that vein. He is virtue personified and is devoted to truth. As Indra is the king of gods, so he is the king of all. Now, how do you dare to take away Sita by force from him? Sita is protected by her chastity and devotion. As it is impossible to rob the sun of its light, so it is impossible to snatch away Sita from Rama.

"Ravana, don't rush into fire-like Rama whose sword and bow and arrows are the tongues of flame. Don't go near death-like Rama by casting aside your kingdom, happiness and love of life. There is no limit to the prowess of him to whom belongs Sita. Rama is the protector of Sita, and you will never succeed in carrying her off. Sita is dearer to Rama than his life, and you will never succeed in subduing that devoted woman,

untouchable like a flame. What will you gain by your vain efforts? I tell you that as soon as Rama will meet you on the battle-field, your end is certain. What shall I say more? Life, happiness and kingdom are three rare things. Consult with your pious counsellors like Bibhishana and others as to the course of action in this matter. Think of the pros and cons of this act, ascertain your own power and the might of Rama, and do what will be ultimately good for you. In my opinion, it is not advisable to fight with Rama. Listen to me, I shall again tell you what is really good for you.

"At one time possessing the strength of thousand elephants, I used to roam over the earth. My body was huge like a mountain, colour blue like that of a cloud, had gold ear-rings on my ears, and a crown on my head. I used to rove in the Dandaka forest taking a *Parigha* and thereby striking terror in the minds of the people and I fed upon the flesh of the hermits. At that time, one day the pious *Rishi* Viswamitra went to king Dasaratha and said that he had been greatly afraid of Maricha and asked for Rama's help for the protection of sacrificial rites. Thereupon, virtuous Dasaratha replied that Rama was only sixteen, that he had not as yet received full training in arms and he wanted to go himself with his vast army for the destruction of that Rakshasa. Viswamitra replied that Dasaratha's valour was well-known in the three worlds, that he even protected the gods in battle, but none but Rama was match for that Rakshasa, and though Rama was a mere boy, yet the Rakshasas would not be able to fight with him. So saying, he took Rama with him. Rama protected Viswamitra and his sacrifice by stretching his bow in the Dandaka

forest. At that time, beards did not grow on his face. He was a beautiful lad, and his colour was soft green. He was then in the state of Brahmacharya. He had a single robe, crested raven-locks waved over his head and he wore a gold chain round his neck. Like the newly-risen moon he illumined the whole forest by his resplendent beauty.

"After this, being haughty for the boon received from Brahma I went to the *ashram* of Viswamitra. Seeing me entering the hermitage with raised arms ready to strike, Rama without any undue haste or anxiety coolly strung his bow.

"Through my foolishness I despised him as a mere boy and rushed towards the sacrificial altar of Viswamitra. In the meantime, Rama discharged an arrow and I fell unconscious into the sea hundred leagues away! My life was spared because he did not intend to kill me at that time.

"After a long time I regained my consciousness and returned to Lanka. Thus I was saved.

"Though Rama was then young in years and not fully trained in the use of arms, yet he killed my other associates and followers.

"Now I ask you not to commit any hostility towards Rama, or ruin and disaster will surely befall you, and you will bring miseries for nothing upon all the Rakshasas, living in societies and fond of sports and festivities, and Lanka full of golden palaces will be reduced to ruins for this.

"Even the virtuous who commit no sin are ruined in the company of the vicious, as the fishes perish in a poisonous pool inhabited by snakes. After this, for your

own fault you will witness the destruction of the Rakshasas, clad in bright dress, adorned with celestial ornaments and their bodies perfumed with sandal, and then the remnants of your train will run away in different directions for shelter, some alone, some with their wives and you will find Lanka besieged, in flames, and reduced to ashes.

"O king, there is not a greater sin than to carry away another's wife. You have thousands of ladies in your seraglio, be content with them and thereby save the Rakshasa race. If you want to enjoy your kingdom, wealth, coveted life, friends, beautiful wives and honour for a long time, then never act against Rama. I am your friend and I ask you repeatedly not to do this. If you slight my words and insult Sita by force then you will, surely, with your friends and relations, meet death, vanquished by the shafts of heroic Rama.

"O king, I was somehow saved at the time of Viswamitra's sacrifice, but just listen what has occurred quite recently. Without being humbled, even at the risk of my life, I again entered the Dandaka forest with two Rakshasas in the form of deer. My tongue was like that of fire, teeth large, and horns sharp. Assuming that formidable form of a deer, I used to roam about fearlessly in the Dandaka forest and began to feed upon the flesh and blood of the hermits and thereby putting an end to all religious practices. Wild animals of the forest were frightened at my sight.

"In the course of my ravages I saw pious Rama living on spare diet, and also saw honourable Sita and mighty Lakshmana. At the sight of Rama the memory of

old enmity revived and I at once rushed for his destruction in great rage. By that time Rama discharged three arrows at me. They came flying with the velocity of the wind like flaming thunderbolts. At that I stepped aside at a little distance, but the other two Rakshasas were immediately killed. Thus being saved from Rama's arrows I have been leading the life of an anchorite. To speak the truth, under the shadow of every tree, I find Rama clad in bark standing like death with the noose¹ in his hand. And through fear I always see thousands of Rama before me as if the whole forest is pervaded by Rama's presence. I startle even in my dreams at his sight. I see Rama where there is nothing, and startle at names beginning with R such as Ratna² and Ratha.³ In fact, Rama's prowess is not unknown to me, and it is not possible for you to fight against him. If he desires, he can kill even Vali and Namucha. Whether you fight against him or not, if you want to see me alive, don't talk about him in my presence. Many pious men with their families on this earth have met with their destruction for another's misdeed. The same case may be with me. O Lord of the Rakshasas, do what you like, but I shall not follow you.

"Rama is exceedingly mighty and intelligent ; he will surely destroy the race of the Rakshasas. Very well, just tell me what great wrong Rama has committed by

1 It is said that at the time of death, Yama casts the thread of destiny like a noose round the dying man's neck and drags out the reluctant real being, encased in astral body, from this mortal abode of flesh, probably hence Death is represented holding a noose in his hand.

2 Jewels.

3 Chariot.

killing Khara in battle who challenged him in fight for Surpanakha ? O king, I am your well-wisher and dear friend, if you don't pay heed to my words then you will be destroyed with your dear and near ones even today."

CHAPTER XIV

RAVANA'S REPLY

As one desirous of death does not take any medicine, so Ravana, whose end was nigh, did not agree to these reasonable words of Maricha, but harshly replied, "Ah, low-born wretch, you have advised me what is highly improper. But your words will prove futile like seeds fallen on a barren soil.

"You will never succeed in this way to dissuade me from my hostilities towards that foolish and despicable human being who could renounce his parents, friends, kingdom and everything at the bidding of a woman. I shall carry away in your presence his darling wife, Sita. This is my resolve and not even Indra with host of gods will succeed in dissuading me. You could have spoken like this, if I had doubts in any matter and had I asked for your advice as to its propriety and impropriety, or for its ways and means. A counsellor, who is wise and wishes well when questioned about anything should reply humbly with joined hands before his master and should point out what is good or favourable to his master, as sanctioned by polity. The king who is particular about his dignity rejects even well-meaning words if they are in any way insulting or contradict his opinion.

A king assumes the spirit¹ of the five gods,—Agni, Indra, Chandra, Yama and Varuna.

"For this haughtiness, might, kindness, repression and contentment are found in him. So you should honour the king on all occasions. Maricha, I am your guest, but being ignorant of court manners and through your stupidity you have used harsh expressions towards me. I never asked for your opinion about the merits and demerits of my contemplated act ; I only asked for your help, so it is highly unbecoming to talk in this vein. However, you will have to help me in my undertaking. Now listen to me what you will have to do. You will assume the form of a golden deer flecked with silver dots and stray about in the sight of Sita in Rama's hermitage. Sita will be struck with wonder at your sight and will request Rama to capture you without delay. When Rama will follow you for that purpose, decoy him to a great distance and then cry in Rama's voice, 'Alas Sita ! Alas Lakshmana !' Hearing that, Lakshmana at the importunities of Sita and out of his deep brotherly love will proceed towards the direction of Rama. When both of them will thus leave the hermitage, I shall carry off Sita, as Indra brought Sachi. Maricha, I offer you half of my kingdom, do this and then go wherever you like. Now come, I shall follow you in my car to the Dandaka forest and thus deluding Rama I shall return with you to Lanka after procuring Sita.

1 In the original the word Rupa means forms but here it means the spirit or element each of the gods produces in particular. Agni (Fire) producing haughtiness, Indra (Jupiter) prowess, Chandra (Moon) generosity, no doubt a gentle quality, Yama (Pluto or Death) power of repression or

"But if you don't comply with my request I shall kill you even this day, so you will have to do it for fear of death. He never wins good reputation who acts against his sovereign. What shall I say more? If you act against me, surely your life will be in peril; knowing this to be certain, do what you think best."

Being thus commanded by Ravana, Maricha boldly replied in angry words, "O Chief of the Rakshasas, who is that wicked that has advised you to rush to your ruin with your children, counsellors and kingdom? Who is that vile person that has been unhappy at the sight of your happiness? Which foolish person has pointed to you the gate of death under the pretext of indicating you the means? Which mean fellow has instigated you to be ready for such an act? He wishes to encompass your ruin by your acts. Your enemies are comparatively weak and they wish to see your destruction by a formidable foe. O king, the counsellors who do not restrain you finding you deviating from the right course deserve death. Then why do you not yourself put them to death? When a self-willed king treads upon a wrong path, honest counsellors restrain him, but I find it to be otherwise in your case. Kings can acquire virtue, wealth, fame and objects of desire even residing in palaces, but when the king goes wrong, destruction visits the people. In fact, the king is the fountain-head of righteousness and honour. He should therefore be warned at every step. That king's kingdom comes to ruin who is unruly and haughty, as a car is dashed to

punishment and Varuna (Neptune, in Sanskrit, he is also the presiding deity of wine hence) producing contentment or cheerfulness.

pieces by wreckless driver. The subjects of an irritable king who acts against the welfare of the people become imperilled like a flock of deer protected by a wolf. I shall not be least sorry if I lose my life even now in the hands of Rama, but I am really sorry to think that you will be soon destroyed with your army. That hero will soon kill you after slaying me. I shall consider myself rather fortunate in meeting death at his hand. Know it for certain that I shall die as soon as I meet him, and you will also meet death with your near and dear ones for carrying away Sita. If you succeed with my help to carry off Sita, Lanka will surely be reduced to ruins. Ravana, I am your well-wisher and friend, and I ask you repeatedly to stop, but you do not brook my words. When death marks one as his own, the words of a friend become unbearable to him, no doubt."

CHAPTER XV

THE TRANSFORMATION

Maricha again spoke to Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, with a sorrowful heart, "Ravana, let us now depart from the place. If Rama with bow in his hand sees me again, I shall surely be killed. None will be able to rescue me alive by his prowess from his hands. You will also be killed. Rama is like Destruction to you. You are unrighteous. What can I do for you? May you be happy! Let me now take my leave."

Ravana was delighted at Maricha's words and after embracing him warmly said, "Uncle, you have now bravely expressed yourself to fulfil my desire. Now I recognise you to be real Maricha, so long you seemed to be a different person. Now get upon my jewelled car,

that courses through the sky and is yoked with asses. After alluring Sita go wherever you like, and in opportune moment I shall carry her off by force."

Then Ravana and Maricha got upon the heavenly car and soon arrived at the Dandaka forest seeing various towns, villages, forests, streams and hills on their way. Ravana then alighted from his car and clasping Maricha's hand said, "Uncle, there stands Rama's *ashram* surrounded by plantain trees. Now expedite the thing for which we have come."

Thereupon, Maricha in an instant resumed the form of an enchanting deer. Its horns were glistening like the finest jewels. Its ears like lotus-petals were made of blue gems and its mouth, as if, was made of red and blue lotuses. Its arch neck was little raised, its belly was made of sapphire, its flanks were pink like Madhuka flowers and its colour was like the tint of a red lotus, soft and lovely, its hoofs were made of dark blue stones. It was of lean thighs and firm joints. Its body was flecked with silver dots and sparkled with the sheen of diverse metals and its little upraised tail shone like a rainbow. The green forest and the cottage of Rama was lit up by its wonderful beauty.

Then the deer in order to tempt Sita began to stray about hither and thither, sometimes browsing on creepers and leaves and then entered the plantain grove. Afterwards, to attract Sita's notice, it began to move about slowly through the Karnika woods. Sometimes it galloped, sometimes it slowed its motion, sometimes it returned to its former place in wild sport, sometimes it squatted upon the ground, sometimes it approached Rama's cottage behind a flock of deer and again returned

to its former place following another herd. Thus it skipped about hither and thither. Other deer of the forest came near it at its sight but no sooner they came they ran away at the smell of his body.

Maricha was most fond of venisons, but somehow he restrained his appetite for this disguise.

In the meantime, while Janaki, whose glance intoxicates like wine, was busy in gathering flowers and was straying about through the Karnika, Asoka and Mango groves she beheld this golden deer bedecked with gems.

She fondly gazed upon the wonderful deer with eyes expanded with admiration and surprise. The deer, too, saw the darling of Rama and skipped about to and fro, illuminating the whole forest by the splendour of its beauty.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DELUSION

Seeing that wonderful deer, Sita, of gold-like resplendent hue, called aloud in great delight, "O Lord, soon come hither taking Lakshmana with you." Again and again she gazed upon the deer in delight and again and again she called aloud her husband.

Being thus summoned by Sita, Rama hied to her side taking Lakshmana in his company and espied the deer.

Then Lakshmana expressing his suspicions said, "*Arya* ! Meseems Maricha has assumed this form of a deer. Previously in the guise of a stag, he destroyed many princes who came for hunting in this forest. Maricha is a great sorcerer and he has assumed the form of this beautiful deer by magic. It is impossible for

such a jewelled deer to exist on earth. It is surely a dark incantation, there is no doubt about it."

But Janaki, under the influence of a spell, interrupting Lakshmana's speech broke forth with a cheerful smile, "My Lord, that beautiful deer has captivated my mind, please capture it. We shall sport with it. Many a Chamara, Srimara, Rik, monkeys and Kinnaras visit our hermitage, they are lovely, no doubt; but none is half so beautiful, resplendent and quiet. I have never seen anything like it. This golden deer, variegated in colours and beautiful like the moon, stands before me as the light of the forest. O, how beautiful! How lovely! O, what a voice! This wonderful deer is drawing my mind. It will indeed be a wonderful feat, if you can capture it alive. After the period of our exile when we shall regain our kingdom, this deer will be an ornament and beauty of our seraglio. To Bharata, mothers-in-law and all of us it will always be an object of wonder. If the deer cannot be secured alive, its beautiful skin will be of great use to us. I shall spread this golden skin over the grass and shall sit upon it. It is improper for a woman to command her husband for her own interest, but to speak the truth, I have become greatly enamoured of that animal."

Hearing these words of Janaki, Rama cast his glance upon the deer with golden skin and sapphire-like horns, with diamond tips, beautiful as the first blush of dawn or the milky way¹ and in deep amazement said, "Look, how eager is Sita for that deer! This deer will

1 In the original—"like the orbit of the stars," but as it fails to convey the idea of beautiful or luminous, so I have taken the liberty of rendering it as the milky way.

lose its life today for its superb beauty at my hand. Not to speak of this earth, there is not one like it in the Chaitraratha forest. How its golden down is evenly arranged downwards and upwards! How red and flaming is its tongue that shines like a drinking cup of sapphire, and its flanks are bright like conch and pearl! Who is not attracted by the sight of this beautiful deer? Princes either for sport or for meat kill deer, and in the course of their hunting they even collect many gems and precious metals. These riches obtained from the wild that fill their coffers are no doubt better than those obtained from other sources, like objects of enjoyment obtained with the very desire of those inhabiting the heaven. Political economists define that to be wealth which people, desirous of wealth, pursue with a fixed determination. Now Janaki is desirous of sitting with me on this fine golden skin. Perhaps the skin of Kadali, Priaki, Pribeni, or of goat is not equal to it. My boy, you consider it to be a Rakshasi magic, then surely it deserves to be killed. Formerly, this cruel Maricha killed many princes and ascetics. Vatapi was digested by Agastya. Since this wicked Maricha wants to overcome me, he will be killed like Vatapi. Now put on your armour and protect Sita carefully. It is our duty to protect her. If this stag be Maricha I shall surely kill him, or if it be a real deer, I shall return with it. Look, how eager Sita has become for that deer-skin. So long I do not kill it, remain in cottage with Sita. I shall soon return with its skin. Lakshmana, powerful Jatayu is intelligent and expert, protect Sita with vigilance with his help."

Warlike Rama having said this to Lakshmana carried a sword with gold hilt and equipped himself with a bow bent at three places, and with two quivers.

Seeing Rama thus set out, the deer concealed itself in fear and then appeared again. Rama in quick paces proceeded towards the deer, and he saw everything illumined before him by the halo of its beauty.

At that time, the deer was alternately casting glance upon Rama and then darted away from him. At times it went outside the range of the arrow and at times it came within the reach of his hand. Thus it tempted Rama. Gradually, fear of death agitated its mind and made it restless, and it began to run fast, as if bounding through the air. Thus at one moment it became invisible, but the next moment it showed itself at a distance. Thus the deer appeared like the moon peeping through scattered clouds, and thus it gradually drew away Rama to a great distance from the cottage.

Thereupon Rama, desirous of securing the deer, was at the same time much provoked and tempted. Thus being fatigued in the chase, Rama sat on the green turf under the shade. During that time the stag appeared at a distance along with other deer. Rama again ran to capture it. At this, the deer was greatly alarmed and disappeared at once and again appeared at a distance behind the screen of a tree. Thereupon, Rama resolved to kill the deer and discharged from his bow a sharp arrow glittering like the sun's rays. That deadly shaft like a flaming snake struck the heart of Maricha. At that blow, he bounding high like a palmyra tree raised a terrible yell. His life was about to ebb and in his last moments he cast off his assumed form of a deer. He then

remembered Ravana's words and thought of the means that might induce Sita to send off Lakshmana from her side, so that Ravana might carry her off in secrecy. He then considered Ravana's plan to be the best, and he cried in the voice of Rama, "Alas Sita! Alas Lakshmana!"

His counterfeit form of a deer was gone and he assumed the hedious form of a huge Rakshasa.

Rama finding the Rakshasa bathed in blood and rolling in dust remembered Lakshmana's words that it was Rakshasi magic. It was no doubt true, he thought, but he had killed Maricha. But at the time of death the Rakshasa gave up his ghost crying, 'Alas Sita! Alas Lakshmana!' Heaven knows what will Janaki do hearing that sound, and what will happen to Lakshmana! He was startled and greatly alarmed at this thought and became deeply sad.

He then killed another deer and was swiftly returning to the cottage with its meat.

CHAPTER XVII

SITA'S ANXIETY

Here Janaki hearing a cry coming from the forest in the voice of Rama said to Lakshmana, "Lakshmana, go and ascertain what untoward thing has happened to my lord. He is crying in distress. I have distinctly heard his voice. I have become restless with anxiety. Go and protect him. He is asking for protection being in the grip of the Rakshasas formidable as lions. Run to him quickly."

But Lakshmana thinking of Rama's directions was quite reluctant to go. At this, Janaki was beside

herself with rage and said, "You are not going to Rama's help even under these circumstances. You are his enemy in the guise of a friend. You wish for his death in order to secure me.¹ It is clear to me that just for your lust for me you have refrained from going to your brother. You have not the least love for your brother, therefore you pray for his disaster. This is why you are so calm in his absence, ostensibly following whom you have come to this forest. If he dies I see no necessity for keeping my life."

When Janaki like a frightened deer said all these in a distressed mind, Lakshmana replied, "O worshipful lady, even the gods, the giants, the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas and the *sarpas* cannot defeat your husband. I do not find anybody in the three worlds a fit match for Rama. He is invincible, so it does not behove thee to utter such words. Rama is not present, and it is not proper to leave you alone in the forest. Even the strongest cannot withstand his prowess. If all the people of the three worlds be united with Indra and other gods, they will be defeated by the valour of Rama. Be comforted and banish your sorrow. Rama will soon return after slaying that golden deer. What you have

1 Sita was no doubt mad with anxiety and there was every justification for her fears for Rama, yet such a base insinuation against a brother like Lakshmana who had renounced his happiness and future and followed Rama like a devoted servant is at least unworthy of Sita, if not anything else. Dramatic necessity for this tragic fate was indeed imperative and the poet found it hard to make Lakshmana disobey Rama's injunctions unless there were such cruel imputations which sets Sita's anxiety for Rama and Lakshmana's sense of honour in juxtaposition.

heard is not his cry, nor any supernatural voice. It is the magic of that wicked Maricha. Noble Rama has left you under my care. Therefore, I do not dare leave you alone. You see, we have incurred the hostility of the Rakshasas by the destruction of Janasthana and for the death of Khara. Those malicious devils in order to delude us talk like this in the forest. Therefore, don't at all be anxious for Rama."

Janaki then harshly replied with her eyes red in anger, "Ah cruel wretch, the defiler of your line! Shame on your disgraceful conduct! You are speaking thus because you desire Rama's disaster and there is nothing to be wondered at this, you are hypocrite, wicked and an enemy to your kith and kin. You wicked villain, it is either at the instigation of Bharata, or at your own initiative that you are deceitfully following Rama just for me. But your desire will never be fulfilled. How can I desire for another having enjoyed the company of lotus-eyed Rama of sweet complexion like that of a blue lotus? I shall give up my life even in your presence. I shall not live even for a moment without Rama."

Hearing these horrible words of Janaki, gentle Lakshmana said with joined hands, "Worshipful lady, you are a goddess to me, I dare not reply to your words. It is not at all strange for a woman to use unjust and improper words, it is rather the nature of a woman, and it is everywhere to be found. They are fickle, irreligious and crooked, and they bring about family dissensions. At any rate, I can no more bear your harsh words. They are torturing my ears like burning shafts piercing through them. The sylvan gods are my witnesses. I

was behaving properly towards you, but you have abused me in extreme. Shame upon you, since you suspect me of such a base thing. It seems, your ruin is nigh. I was simply obeying the mandate of the eldest brother, but you have accused me on account of your womanly nature. May good betide you, I am going where Rama is. I have great misgivings in my mind on account of the dire situation that has arisen. May the deities of the forest protect you ! May I find you here after returning with Rama."

Then Janaki replied in tearful eyes, "In absence of Rama I shall either enter into fire, or into the waters of the Godavari, or I shall put an end to myself either by hanging, or by drinking virulent poison, or I shall throw myself from a great height. But I shall not touch any other person but Rama." Saying this, Janaki began to weep and strike her breast¹ repeatedly. Thereupon, Lakshmana was greatly distressed and tried to console Sita. Janaki remained silent. Lakshmana then bowed to her with joined hands and looking repeatedly at her, proceeded towards Rama with an irritated mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MENDICANT

In the meantime, Ravana assumed the guise of a mendicant, wore a piece of silken cloth, bore a tuft of lock on his head, he held an umbrella in his hand and his feet were shod in sandals. From his left shoulder slung a staff and a water-pot. Wearing this guise of a Bhikshu, he drew near Sita in absence of Rama and

1 In the original it is belly.

Lakshmana, as darkness approaches the evening in absence of the sun and the moon, or as the baleful planet, Ketu, draws near the Rohini star in absence of the moon. Thus wicked Ravana saw Sita seated in the cottage. Seeing him gazing at her with flashing eyes, the wind ceased to blow and the trees of Janasthana stood motionless even the swift Godavari stopped her impetuous course in fear.

Then Ravana in the false guise of a mendicant, like a (treacherous) well-hidden in the grass, came near Sita as the (evil) Saturn draws near the lovely planet, Chitra, and he stood mute casting his glance on her.

Bathed in tears and with a distressed heart, Sita was waiting in the cottage lamenting for her husband, yet her face was beautiful like the full moon, her lips red like the Bimba fruit, her teeth lustrous and her eyes expanded like the petals of a lotus. She was dressed in yellow silk and was illumined by the halo of her beauty.

Ravana was at once smitten with lust, and citing the Vedas he began to praise her greatly and thus he began with an humble air, "Ah, my beauty of golden hue, by wearing a lotus wreath you look like the lotus itself! Perhaps you are Modesty's self, or Beauty, or Honour, or Fortune, or a Nymph or Rati ranging at will. Your teeth are even, glossy and pointed like Jasmine buds. Your eyes are crystal-clear, whose ends are tinged with red and adorned with deep black pupils. Your hips are heavy and plump, thighs are round like the trunk of an elephant. Your breast, high and plump, with their thick and pointed teats is like two closely placed palms, and adorned with jewels seems to be ever waiting for an

embrace. O, my beauty of winning smile, as the current of the river carries off its bank, so you have stolen my mind. Your waist is so slim, hair so dark ! To tell the truth, no Goddess, no Gandharvi, no Yakshi, no Kinnari is like thee. In short, I have never seen a damsel like you on earth. Such superb beauty, such exquisite grace, this prime of youth and this living in seclusion has made me quite anxious on thy account. Leave this forest, it is not at all meet for you to live in this place. It is the hunt of fierce Rakshasas who can assume different forms at will. A prosperous city, a beautiful palace, and a romantic garden are only fit abode for thee. Ah, my beauty, the garland on your neck, the sweet smell of your body, your apparel and even your husband seem to be the very best. Are you in any way related to the Maruts, Rudras or the Vasus ? That you are a goddess is palpable. This forest is not visited by the Gandharvas or the Kinnaras. It is the abode of the Rakshasas, then how could you come here ? Here lions, tigers, bears, hyenas, monkeys and herons roam about freely. Do you not fear them ? Are you not afraid of wild, infuriated elephants ? Now tell me who art thou ? To whom do you belong ? Whence and wherefore have you come to this dreadful Dandaka forest visited by the Rakshasas ?”

Then Janaka's daughter seeing Ravana, in the guise of a Brahmana, received him with due rites of hospitality and offered him seat and water to wash his feet, and said, "Meal is ready."

At that time, she could not neglect Ravana seeing his grave appearance and clad in red and carrying a *Kamandalu*. In fact, from various signs she considered

him to be a Brahmana and invited him as a Brahmana ought to be, "*Vipra*, take your seat here, accept this water for washing your feet. This woodland meal has been cooked for you. Enjoy it freely."

Ravana, for his destruction, thought of carrying away Sita by force. Sita was then waiting for Rama and Lakshmana. She stretched her eyes for their sight, but she saw only vast, extended green forest on all sides.

CHAPTER XIX

THROWING OFF THE MASK

Then Ravana, dressed as a mendicant, asked her introduction. Janaki thought, "He is my guest and a Brahmana, if I don't speak out everything he may curse me now."

She said, "I am the daughter of Janaka, king of Mithila. I have been married to Rama and my name is Sita. After marriage I passed twelve years happily in my father-in-law's house. On the thirteenth year, the king consulting with his ministers thought of installing Rama on the throne. Everything was ready for the coronation ceremony, but worshipful Kaikeyi begged of her truthful husband two boons, one for the installation of Bharata and the other for the exile of Rama. She said, she would give up her life by abstaining from food, if Rama was installed to the throne. King Dasaratha tried to dissuade her by promising immense riches, but she did not agree. Rama was then twenty-five and my age was eighteen. Truthful and gentle Rama went to his father for the installation ceremony but Kaikeyi harshly said that the king had ordered for

Bharata's installation and Rama's exile for fourteen years. 'Rama, go to the forest,' said she, and keep the pledge of your father.'

"Rama readily agreed to her proposal, and acted accordingly. Rama will give, but won't take anything in return, he speaks the truth and never any falsehood. Thus he leads his life. Heroic Lakshmana is his step-brother. He has followed us with bow in his hand and observes an ascetic vow. He is a great help to Rama in battle. Rama has entered the Dandaka forest like a hermit. We have thus been deprived of our kingdom by Kaikeyi. Take a little rest, you will surely be allowed to live here. My husband will soon return with venison by killing different animals. Now *Vipra*, tell me your name, your clan and why you are travelling alone in the Dandaka forest?"

Thus being questioned by Sita, Ravana began in dreadful words, "Janaki! I am Ravana, the lord of the Rakshasas, whose prowess is dreaded by men and gods. Seeing you clad in silk and of golden hue, I can no more be happy with my wives. I have secured a number of beautiful women from different places, thou dost become the foremost queen of them. I possess a great city called Lanka, surrounded by the ocean and resting on hills. If you be my wife, then you will saunter about in the garden of Lanka with me. Five thousand well-dressed women will wait upon you as maids of honour. Then you will no more like to reside in the forest."

At this, Sita was highly enraged and slighting him said, "I shall ever follow Rama who is as steady as the Himalayas and deep as the ocean. Like the Banyan

tree he is the shelter of all. He is honourable, truthful and auspicious. I shall go to him who is mighty as a lion and the foremost of men. Being a jackal how do you aspire after a lioness ?

"As one cannot touch the rays of the sun, so you won't be able to touch me. Ah you low-born wretch ; since you wish for the darling o: Rama, you no doubt see before you hundreds of golden trees ¹ You want to pluck the teeth of a hungry lion or the fangs of an angry snake. You want to retire in safety by drinking virulent poison, or holding the Mandara hill with two hands. You might as well wish to brush your eyes with needles, or may lick a sharp razor with your tongue. You might as well try to swim the ocean tying a weight round your neck, to pluck the sun and the moon, to bind burning flame with a piece of cloth, or to walk freely over iron pikes. The difference between Rama and you is as great as between a lion and a jackal, between a streamlet and the ocean, between nectar and gruel, between gold and iron, between sandal-paste and mud, between an eagle² and a crow, between a peacock and a common waterfowl,³ between a vulture and a swan. If you carry me away when this mighty bowman Rama is alive, you will surely be destroyed, as a fly that sucks on clarified butter."

Saying this, gentle Sita began to shake like a plantain tree.

Then death-like Ravana frowned in anger and put-

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- 1 A premonition of death.
 - 2 In the original the words are Garuda.
 - 3 Magpie, an aquatic bird.

ting Sita to fright said, "Janaki, I am Ravana of formidable might and am the step-brother of Kuvera. As people fear death, so the gods, Gandharvas, *Pisachas*, *Sarpas* and birds are afraid of me. Once I fought a duel with Kuvera and defeated him by my prowess. Since then he has left Lanka and is residing in the Kailas mountains. I have captured by force his *Puspaka* chariot that can go wherever it wills. I now journey through the sky in that chariot. Even Indra and other gods fly at the very sight of my angry face. Where I happen to be, there the wind blows gently in fear, the sun assumes a mild look, the leaves of the trees cease to flutter and the rivers cease to flow. Across the ocean there is my capital Lanka like Amaravati—the heavenly city. It is inhabited by formidable Rakshasas and is surrounded by a white wall. The city gates are made of *lapis lazuli* gems, and its rooms are made of gold. It abounds in horses, elephants and chariots, and flourish of trumpets is constantly heard. Its gardens are picturesque and contain a large number of trees of coveted fruits. Sita, if you live with me in Lanka, you will not long for human companions, and after enjoying heavenly and rare luxury, you will never think of Rama—a human being with a brief span of life. You see, king Dasaratha having banished his weak son has installed his dear one to the throne. Now what will you do with that stupid vagabond deprived of his kingdom? I am the lord of the Rakshasas, I have come to you personally, please receive me. I have been smitten with love, please save me. You must not refuse me. As Urvashi repented for kicking at Pururava, so you will have to rue for disappointing me. Janaki, Rama cannot stand even the

force of a single finger of mine in battle. By your good luck I have come to you, so yield to me."

Hearing this, Sita boldly replied with her eyes flashing in anger, "Claiming Kuvera as your brother, who is adored by all gods, how could you engage yourself in such a nefarious act? You are a sensuous brute, and they whose ruler you are will meet with their destruction. It is even possible to live for some time after carrying off the peerless beauty, Sachi, the queen of Indra, but it is impossible to live in safety by carrying off Rama's wife. Even if you be immortal by drinking nectar, you won't be saved."

CHAPTER XX

ABDUCTION OF SITA

Then powerful Ravana pressed his palms in anger assumed his own form and addressing Sita said, "My beauty, you are mad, perhaps you have not heard about my prowess. I can bear the earth on my hands, can drink ocean, kill Death in battle and pierce the sun and the nether world with my sharp arrows. You are proud of your beauty and youth, now cast your glance at me who can assume any form at will."

As he spoke thus, his blue, fiery eyes became red with anger. He at once cast off the gentle mask of a mendicant and assumed his own fierce form, terrible as death. For some time he stood angrily staring at Sita adorned with a head of black hair and resplendent as sunlight, and said, "My noble lady, if you desire for a husband famous in the three worlds, then accept me. I am worthy of you in every respect. It will be a great honour to you if you serve me all your life. I shall

never do you any harm. Leave aside your attachment for Rama and be devoted to me. Ah, foolish girl, seeming wise, how could you be attached to that stupid Rama with a brief span of life, who at the words of a woman, has come to this fearful forest in exile, leaving behind his kingdom, friends and relations?"

Thus spoke wicked and lustful Ravana. As the planet Budha attacks the star Rohini, so he pounced upon Sita of sweet speech. With his left hand he held her hair and with his right hand he clasped her thighs. The sylvan deities ran away in fear at the sight of Ravana, huge as a mountain.

Then came instantly the magic car drawn by asses with a deep rumbling noise. Ravana got upon the chariot with Sita in his embrace. Sita then in extreme distress called aloud for distant Rama and writhed like a snake to get out of Ravana's hand. But Ravana infuriated with lust soared with her in the sky.

Then Sita, crazed with grief and remorse, began to cry, "Ah, respectful Lakshmana, always obedient to the superiors, dost thou not see that sorcerer Rakshasa is carrying me away? Alas, Rama! thou hast renounced thy happiness and wealth for virtue, dost thou not see that Rakshasa is carrying me off by force? O hero, you always chastise the wicked; why dost thou not teach this villain a lesson? Evil acts do not always bear their fruits in a moment's time, but slowly, like the ripening of the grain, they bring forth by degrees their harvest of woes. You have done this for your own ruin. Alas! the chaste wife of righteous Rama is thus being carried away. Now Kaikeyi's desire will be fulfilled.

"I invoke you, O Janasthana, and the blooming *Karnikaras* to inform Rama without delay that Ravana has stolen away Sita. I ask you, O Godavari, resonant with the cries of swans and ducks, to inform Rama without delay that Ravana has carried off Sita. I invoke you all animals and creatures of the forest, to tell Rama that Ravana has carried off his darling wife. Even if I am carried away by death from this world, Rama will surely recover me by his prowess."

When Sita was thus lamenting bitterly, she beheld Jatayu, the prince of birds on the tree. At his sight, she piteously began, "O worshipful Jatayu, this vicious Rakshasa is carrying me away in helpless condition. This wicked devil is cruel, haughty and powerful. Moreover he is armed. Do tell Rama and Lakshmana about it, so that they may learn everything."

CHAPTER XXI

FIGHT WITH JATAYU

At that time, Jatayu was asleep but hearing these words his sleep was broken, and he beheld Ravana and Sita. Then that big bird with a huge sharp beak said, "Ravana, I am truthful and honest, I am Jatayu, the king of birds. Now, my brother, it is not proper for you to behave like this in my presence. Dasaratha's son Rama is the lord of all and he wishes good to everybody, and he is like Indra and Varuna. Whom you intend to carry away is the wife of Rama, honourable Sita. It is not at all proper for a virtuous king to touch another's wife, specially the wife of a king should always be carefully protected. Give up your low desire concerning another's wife. Another's wife should be protected like

one's own wife from the (contaminating) touch of a third person. Wise men do not act in such a manner that other people can censure them. People follow the example of their king in the pursuit of religion, wealth, objects of desire and salvation. But lord of the Rakshasas, you are sinful, and I wonder how you could acquire such wealth. It is highly difficult to change one's nature, but royal splendour cannot long exist in a vicious man's glance. Ravana, Rama has not injured you in any way, then why do you commit such wrong to him ?

"In Janasthana-forest Khara and Dushana committed wrong on account of Surpanakha and for that Rama killed them in battle. Now tell me what he has really done. However, leave Sita without a moment's delay. As thunderbolt destroyed Vritra, that hero will reduce you to ashes by his angry look. You have unwittingly tied a deadly snake with the end of your cloth, and put a halter round your neck of which you are ignorant. One should carry only that weight that might not exhaust him, or should take only that which he can easily digest. It is not at all good to do such an act which is neither moral nor honourable, but only brings suffering in its wake.

"Ravana, I have been ruling over my ancestral kingdom for a long time. I am sixty thousand years old and you are young, you are armed and is stationed in a chariot, yet you won't be able to run away with Janaki smoothly. As logical reasonings cannot override the immemorial Vedas¹ so you won't be able to take away

1 Mark the passage. Amongst the Hindus the Vedas are always regarded to be the highest authority. In

Sita from my presence. Just wait for a moment, and if you be a hero, be prepared for a fight. You will surely lie down in the battle-field like Khara, you will be soon killed by Rama, the vanquisher of the Danavas. The two princes have gone to the distant forest but if you see them, you will run away in fear. However, you will not succeed in carrying away Rama's darling wife so long I am alive. I shall stake my life for her. Wait a moment; I shall bring you down from your car, like a fruit down from its stalk. You will be duly received in fight according to my might."

Thereupon, Ravana adorned with gold ear-rings became restive with anger and rushed towards Jatayu with red-hot eyes. Then the two warriors met like two clouds clashing against each other by the rush of wind in the sky, and a heavy fight ensued as if two winged hills were engaged in a duel! Jatayu warded off all the blows of Ravana and began to tear Ravana's flesh with his beak and claws. Thereupon, Ravana in great rage discharged ten sharp arrows against Jatayu.

All the time Janaki with tearful eyes was anxiously waiting for the issue of the fight. At this, Jatayu without caring for his injuries rushed towards Ravana and broke his golden shafts and bow.

Ravana grew extremely angry at this and took up another bow and smothered him with arrows. Being beset with arrows, Jatayu looked like a bird nestled in a nest. Jatayu then spreading his wings on air attacked and broke the bright shining car of Ravana, and killed

matters of religion preference is always given to intuitive truths over inferential knowledge.

the charioteer striking him with his beak. Ravana then lighted on the ground with Janaki on his lap.

But Ravana was delighted seeing Jatayu tired on account of his age and he again ascended the chariot with Janaki. Seeing Ravana thus going away with Janaki in delight, Jatayu ran after him and obstructed his way saying, "Ah, you stupid, for the destruction of the Rakshasa race you are carrying away his wife whose arrows are deadly like thunderbolts. You are drinking poison with avidity like a thirsty man. Foolish people, ignorant of the consequences of their acts, soon meet with their ruin like you. You have been ensnared by death, how can you escape? Can that fish escape which has swallowed the hook with a fleshy bait? Rama and Lakshmana are exceedingly powerful; they won't brook this trespass upon their hermitage. You are a veritable coward, and it is nothing but theft. This is not the way in which a brave man acts. Wait and if you be brave, be prepared for a fight. You will surely be killed like Khara. Those whose ends are nigh, commit such sinful acts. You are doing this for your own destruction. Ah villain! who wants to do that whose consequence is evil? Not even the Self-born, the lord of the three worlds, dare do a sinful act."

Saying this, Jatayu swooped on Ravana's back as a rider mounts upon an infuriated elephant. Ravana was greatly tormented by the strikings of his beak. Ravana shook with anger and taking Janaki on the left side of his lap struck Jatayu with his fists. Jatayu thereupon tore off the ten left hands of Ravana, but instantly ten new arms sprang up in their place like venomous snakes emerging from an ant-hill. Ravana then left Sita and

began to shower kicks and blows on Jatayu. A hard contest ensued, and Jatayu fought at the risk of his life for Rama. Ravana, however, hastily took up his sword and cut Jatayu's wings into pieces. Jatayu at once fell on the ground and was on the point of death.

Seeing Jatayu lying on the ground bathed in blood Janaki hastened towards him with a distressed heart like one that goes near a dying friend, and began to weep by his side.

Ravana was extremely delighted seeing that huge bird like a blue cloud, with yellow breast, fallen like an extinguished forest-fire.

CHAPTER XXIII

PLIGHT OF SITA

Then Janaki, with moon-like face, embracing Jatayu broke forth in tears, "Dreams, throbbings of limbs, cries of birds and animals are said to presage happiness and sorrow of man. Rama, for me birds and animals are rushing into danger, but you know not what great evil is impending on you. This Jatayu, the prince of birds, came forward to protect me out of compassion, but due to my ill luck lies dead on the ground."

Sita then in great fear began to speak, as if addressing one by her side, "Alas Rama! Alas Lakshmana! save me today." Thus she began to weep like a forlorn creature. Ravana then again darted to capture her.

Sita then in fear clung round a tree, as a creeper twins round its trunk.

"Just leave it, leave it," repeating these words Ravana came near Sita, and Janaki cried aloud calling Rama. But Ravana, for his death, seized her by the hair.

At once great commotions were seen in Nature. Intense darkness enveloped everything. The sun grew dim and the wind ceased to blow. The Grandsire of creation, Brahma, seeing this insult on Janaki said, "Perhaps we shall now succeed." The hermits of the Dandaka forest felt delighted at the prospect of Ravana's death, but they were pained to see with their own eyes Sita dragged by the hair.

Sita was ever crying for Rama and Lakshmana. Ravana, however, forcibly took her and soared into the sky. Then Sita of golden hue and clothed in amber robes shone like a lightning in the sky. And Ravana looked like a hill on fire on account of her cloth streaming in the air. At that time, the petals of red lotuses fragrant with the sweet odour of her body rained on Ravana's laps and her golden cloth streaming in the air shone like crimson clouds of the evening. Alas, the sweet countenance of Sita in Ravana's lap appeared sad like a lotus torn from its stalk, or like the pale moon coursing its way through a bank of dense, dark clouds. A sweet lily-like odour was coming out of her faultless face, endowed with a graceful forehead, lovely hair, beautiful nose, crimson lips, bright pearly teeth and expanded eyes. That beautiful face was bathed in tears, looked pallid, like the moon in daylight, without Rama. Janaki was of golden hue, and Ravana was dark blue to see and she appeared like a golden chain round an elephant's neck, and shone as lightning in the midst of dark clouds, and on account of the jingling sounds of her ornaments, Ravana seemed to be a rumbling cloud. The flowers from her tresses fell on Ravana's lap and he then shone like the Sumeru peak girt by a cluster of stars.

After a short time, the jewelled anklets, glittering as lightning, slipped from her feet, and her shining ornaments, bright as flame, one by one, dropped from the sky like a shower of glowing meteors! Her jewelled necklace, bright as moonshine, slipped from her breast and shone like the stream of the Ganges falling from the sky.

The birds clamoured on shaking boughs, fish and other aquatic animals starved in water, and the lotus faded in grief for the sorrow of Janaki. Even lions and tigers ran in anger under the shadow of Sita. The mountains with their peaks, like upraised arms, wailed with their fountains of tears.

Even the sun grew dim in sorrow. Ravana was carrying off Rama's Sita; certainly all righteousness had come to an end, thus bemoaned all creatures. A sudden terror seized the young deer and the sylvan gods cast startled looks from their eyes, dim with fright, and shook in fear.

Janaki then anxiously looked down for friends again and again. Her dark hair hung in the air, and tears washed off her *Tilak*. She swooned for Rama and Lakshmana.

But cruel Ravana proceeded with her along the sky.

CHAPTER XXIII

SITA'S SPEECH

Sita, finding Ravana carrying her off through the sky became extremely agitated. Her eyes were red with weeping and rage, and being distressed with sorrow she said pathetically:

"Don't you feel ashamed in carrying me thus like a

thief finding me quite helpless and alone ? It is through fear that you decoyed my husband to a great distance in the form of that magic deer. Alas ! you have also killed Jatayu, the friend who attempted to rescue me. Wonderful is indeed your might, but you are carrying me away (like a trophy) without obtaining me in war. It is a heinous crime to carry away another's wife in a helpless state, and are you not ashamed of such a disgraceful act ? You seem to be anxious for the reputation of a hero, but people will now condemn you for this evil deed. Fie on your heroic boasts, disgrace to your conduct, this will put a stigma on your line. What shall I do since you are running away with me ? But wait for a moment and if those two princes meet you, you will not be saved even with your large host. As a bird cannot bear the slightest touch of fire, so you won't be able to bear their shafts. Now if you wish your good, just leave me, or my husband will destroy you in his anger. You are forcibly carrying me away for a nefarious end, but your desire will not be fulfilled. I shall not live long amongst the enemies in absence of my godly husband.

"Can't you understand what is good for you ? A man acts in a perverse manner, when his end is nigh, and you are behaving like that. The moribund do not like their diets. Since you are undaunted when there is sufficient cause of fear, it seems that the noose of death is already round your neck. You will surely have visions of rivers of blood, golden trees with flowers of gold and leaves of blue gems, and *Salmali* tree with iron thorns and of a forest of sword-like leaves. You are taking poison in the form of incurring displeasure of

Rama. You are indeed in the trap of death. He who has killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas with his shafts will surely kill you for carrying away his dear wife."

Sita thus said many hard things against Ravana but being overwhelmed with grief and fear she lamented bitterly. Ravana, however, hied through the sky taking that distressed young beauty with him.

When Janaki found that there was nobody to save her, she saw five apes seated on a hill. She threw down her silken cloth of golden hue, her scarf and fine ornaments, thinking that they might inform Rama. But Ravana could not know anything of it on account of the speed of his flight.

As soon as those articles were thrown, the monkeys with their brownish yellow eyes looked up and saw large-eyed Sita weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIV

SITA'S LOT

Ravana gradually crossed the Pampa and proceeded towards Lanka. He carried in senseless delight a deadly snake on his lap.

Wicked Rayana after crossing many hills, rivers, lakes and forests with the speed of a flying arrow, arrived at the shore of the sea, full of sharks, crocodiles and whales. At that time, the billows of the ocean lashed themselves into eddies in sorrow, and fishes and snakes remained inert in water. Then the celestials talked amongst themselves that Ravana's doom was at hand.

Ravana with Sita then entered the great city of Lanka with its well-laid and spacious roads and people thronging at the city-gate. And there, entering his

palace, he placed distressed Sita as Maydanava kept the demoniac Maya.¹

Placing Sita there, Ravana addressing the frightful Rakshasis said, "Let none, whether male or female, see Sita without my permission. Give her instantly whatever she likes ; jewels, ornaments, gold or" apparel. If anybody uses any harsh expression towards her, either wilfully or unwittingly, I shall surely put that person to death."

Formidable Ravana after giving these directions to the Rakshasis emerged out of his inner court and thought what to do next. At that time, his eyes fell upon eight redoubtable, flesh-eating Rakshasas. Proud Ravana, seeing them, highly eulogised their valour and said, "Look here ! hie with your weapons to Janasthana where heroic Khara lived, but depopulated now. Live there fearlessly depending on your valour. There I stationed a large Rakshasa army, but all have been slain by Rama's shafts. Great hostility now exists between myself and Rama. I shall punish him afterwards and I shall not sleep till I destroy him. On his death, I shall be as glad as a poor man feels happy on securing wealth. Now go and give me true informations about Rama. Proceed cautiously and try your best to kill him. In many a battle I have witnessed your valour, it is therefore that I send you thither."

Then those eight Rakshasas greeted Ravana and secretly left for Janasthana with that gratifying but difficult mandate.

Ravana too felt delighted by confining Sita within his palace.

1. Magic or illusion here compared to a maid.

After despatching those dreadful Rakshasas to Janasthana, Ravana, in his perverse wit, thought him as crowned with success and he was smitten with lust at the constant thoughts of Sita. Thereupon, he soon entered the inner court of his palace to see her.

On entering the apartment, Ravana saw Sita surrounded by the Rakshasis, weighed down with sorrow and silently shedding tears with a downcast gaze. At that time, she looked miserable like a sinking craft overtaken by storm in the sea, or like a doe hounded by the dogs that has been separated from the herd.

Ravana approached her and showed her against her will all the glories of his palace.

"These mansions and palaces," said Ravana, "are full of gems and they rest on crystal, gold, silver and ivory pillars, ornamented with diamond and lapis lazuli. The windows are made of ivory and silver, and are protected with golden nets. Their floors are smooth and white. Thousands of beauties and thousands of beautiful birds live there, and there are tanks and lakes strewn with lilies."

Then wicked Ravana ascended the magnificent palace with Sita as into a heavenly mansion through golden stairs resounding at every step like a deep rumbling drum, and pointed to her the beauties of his castle.

Then to incite cupidity and greed in Sita's mind, he said, "Janaki, besides the young and the old, I am the ruler over thirty-two millions of Rakshasas, and thousands of them speed at my command. Ah, my darling! thou art dearer to me than life. This life and my kingdom belong to you. I entreat you to be my wife. Be thou the queen over all the beauties that wait on me. Don't

disagree. Janaki, please accede to my words. I am being consumed with the fire of passion, have pity on me.

"Look, this spacious Lanka, girt by the ocean, is inaccessible even to the gods and demons. There is none among the celestials, Yakshas, Gandharvas and *Rishis* who dare challenge me. My beauty, Rama is a puny creature, he is a man. He is weak and has been deprived of his kingdom, and has no conveyance but walks on foot. What will you do with such poor Rama? Fix your mind on me, I am worthy of you in every respect. Ah, my timid beauty! youth is ever fleeting, enjoy yourself with me and banish all thoughts about seeing Rama. He can't come here even by riding on his thoughts. It is rather possible to chain the strong wind of heaven, or to catch hold of the glowing flames of fire! Janaki, I am your guard and I see none in the three worlds who can take you away by force. Now, rule over this extensive Lanka, and I shall be your slave. The gods and all the creatures of the world will serve you as servants. Take your bath, remove your langour and get ready for enjoying yourself. The sin that you might have committed has already been expiated by your exile in the forest, now enjoy the reward of your meritorious deeds. Here are beautiful garlands and fine ornaments, let us decorate ourselves with them. My brother Kuvera had a chariot called *Puspaka*. It is highly beautiful, bright like the sun and spacious, and it can travel with the speed in which thoughts can travel. I have procured it by my prowess. Just get upon it and let us go wherever you like. My darling, your face is lovely like a sweet lily, but it has been greatly tarnished with sorrow."

When Ravana said this, Sita covered her face with the end of her cloth and began to shed tears. She was weighed down with sorrow and deeply absorbed in anxious thoughts.

At this Ravana said, "Don't think of shame for this violation. The tie of love with which we two shall be united offends no morality. I do now touch your feet, be pleased with me. I am your obedient servant. Let not my prayer, prompted by ardent love, be in vain. Ravana hath never before lowered his head to any woman's feet."

Saying this, the lord of Lanka, under the spell of death, thought, "She is mine."

CHAPTER XXV

FACING THE LION

Then Sita oppressed with sorrow, placing a blade of grass between herself and Ravana, fearlessly said, "Hear me, Rakshasa! there was a famous king named Dasaratha. He was like a pillar¹ of virtue. Virtuous Rama is his son. He is an Ikshwaku prince. He is my husband and my worshipful deity. He is truthful, famous and possesses mighty arms and large eyes. He with heroic Lakshmana will put you to death. Had you attempted to overcome me by force in his presence, surely you would have been slain in battle like Khara. The grim Rakshasas mentioned by you will be harmless as venomous snakes before Garuda. His golden shafts will bring you down as the waves of the Ganges carry off its banks. Thou mayst be incapable of being slain by the gods or the Asuras, but you won't be able to

¹ In the original it is "bridge".

save yourself by incurring the enmity of Rama. That hero will kill you without doubt ; you are doomed like an animal tied to a sacrificial stake. You will be reduced to ashes by the angry look of Rama, as Cupid was by the glance of Rudra. He who can bring down the moon from the sky and dry up the sea, will rescue Sita from this place. Ah, you villain ! strength, glory and intelligence have left you, and for you Lanka will be a widowed city. Thou hast torn me from my husband's side, the end of this sinful act will never be good. Powerful Rama and Lakshmana will humble your pride. When one's end is nigh, he becomes careless about everything. That fateful time has arrived for you, and for this outrage done to me you will be destroyed with all your people. I am the devoted wife of Rama and thou shalt never be able to touch my person. A Chandala (outcaste) cannot touch the sacred sacrificial altar sanctified by mantras and decorated with wreaths. The consort of a swan that sports with her mate amidst lotuses—how can she favour with her glance a water-crow straying amongst weeds and bushes ? This body is now useless to me, you may chain it, or destroy it. I shall not preserve it any more, nor will ever bear the stigma of unchastity."

Thus said Sita in great indignation and anger.

Hearing these words sufficient to make one's hair stand on their ends, he said threatening Sita, "Hear me, Sita, I shall wait for twelve months. If you do not be favourably inclined during this time, then my cooks will cut you into pieces to serve with the morning meal."¹

1 This constant allusion to cannibalism is a set-off against the astounding material civilisation of Ravana.

Then turning towards the grim Rakshasis, Ravana said, "Listen to me, Rakshasis, humble her pride immediately."

At these words, the Rakshasis surrounded Janaki. Ravana then proceeded a few paces shaking the earth by his heroic treads, then turning to them said, "Go, take Sita to the Asoka forest and guard her there carefully, and sometimes by fright and sometimes by solaces try to bring her gradually under your sway, just as a wild elephant is tamed."

Thereupon, the Rakshasis took Sita to the Asoka wood. There were a number of *Trees of Desire* bearing fruits and flowers, granting every prayer, and the place was resonant with the joyous notes of birds.

Thenceforth, Janaki being surrounded by the Rakshasis passed her days as a doe in the midst of tigresses, and was distressed like a deer caught in a trap and knew not a moment's respite. Grim-visaged Rakshasis roared and intimidated her. She was overwhelmed with grief and fear and swooned in thinking of Rama and Lakshmana.

CHAPTER XXVI

RAMA'S RETURN

In the meantime, Rama after slaying Maricha in the form of a deer proceeded towards the hermitage to meet Sita. At that time, jackals began to howl after him. Rama was greatly alarmed by their harrowing cries. "Certainly, something evil has happened since the jackals are crying so. Perhaps the rovers of night have devoured Janaki. Wicked Maricha surely intending some evil unto me cried in imitation of my voice. If

Lakshmana heard that cry, he would come here leaving Sita alone, or if Sita heard it, then she would send him here. It is the ardent desire of the Rakshasas to kill Janaki. This was why Maricha assuming the form of a golden deer had decoyed me to such a distance and then cried out, "Alas Lakshmana, I am dying." Since my fight at Janasthana I have incurred the hostility of the Rakshasas. We have left the cottage and I see evil portents on all sides. Heaven knows whether Sita is doing well or not."

At the howling of the jackals Rama became extremely anxious and with a distressed mind hastily proceeded towards the cottage. The birds and the animals that came near Rama at that time began to cry fearfully on his left. After a while, Rama saw Lakshmana from a distance coming towards him. Both looked anxious and sad, and as soon as Rama met Lakshmana he reprimanded Lakshmana for leaving Sita alone in that dreadful forest, and taking Lakshmana's left hand in his palm broke forth with a sad but sweet voice, "Lakshmana, you have done a great wrong in coming here leaving Janaki alone. Heaven knows what dire calamity has befallen her. I see dark portents everywhere; surely Sita has been stolen or eaten up by the Rakshasas. Look, the animals and the birds are crying in the left, so I cannot by any means think that Janaki is safe. Maricha decoyed me to a long distance. I have killed him somehow, and he assumed the form of a Rakshasa at the time of death, yet my mind is sad and cheerless. My left eye is throbbing, it seems Sita is no more. Either somebody has taken her away, or she is dead, or she is wandering in distress."

Then Rama finding Lakshmana sad and distressed, asked him, "My boy, she who has followed me to the Dandaka forest and whom you have left alone, where is that Janaki now? I have been deprived of my kingdom and am passing a nomadic life in the forest; now where is Janaki, my companion in sorrow? Without seeing whom I cannot live for a moment, where is that Janaki, my help-mate in life? I do not crave for heaven or ruling over the earth in absence of Janaki, of dainty waist, of golden hue, like a daughter of gods. Now tell me the truth whether my darling is alive or not? If I die for Sita, return to Ayodhya alone. Mother Kaikeyi will be happy seeing the kingdom quite secured to her son and mother Kausalya, sad and saintly, will humbly wait upon them. Lakshmana, I shall enter the cottage if Sita is alive, or I shall give up my life, if she is dead. If she does not greet me with her smile, I shall die. Tell me whether she is alive or the Rakshasas have eaten her up through your carelessness? Alas! Janaki is too young and tender, she can't bear any pain. Surely, she has been greatly distressed by my absence. When wicked Maricha cried, 'Alas Lakshmana!' were you alarmed by it? Perhaps Janaki, finding the voice like that of mine, sent you through fear, therefore you have hastily come to see me. However, you have not acted right by leaving Sita alone in the forest. By this, you have given opportunity to the cruel Rakshasas for doing evil. These carnivorous Rakshasas have been greatly mortified at Khara's death, so there is not the least doubt that they will kill Sita. Alas! I have fallen in great distress and I know not what to do, perhaps this was decreed in fact."

Rama thus being greatly distressed by anxious thoughts about Sita, hastily proceeded towards the cottage, taking Lakshmana to task. His countenance grew pale with hunger, thirst and fatigue. He was weighed down with sorrow and breathed heavily.

Rama again sorrowfully asked, "My boy, since in great confidence I kept Janaki under your charge, why did you leave her and come hither? I have been greatly alarmed seeing you coming here alone without Sita. My left eye and arm are throbbing incessantly and my heart is trembling ever." Lakshmana then mournfully replied to sorrowful Rama :

"Arya ! I have not come hither leaving Sita of my free will. She despatched me with harsh words, therefore I have come to you. Janaki heard you crying aloud, 'Lakshmana, save me.' Hearing that cry for your help, Janaki was greatly alarmed and, on account of her love for you, she with tearful eyes urged me again and again to come out. Then to assure her I said, 'Worshipful lady, I do not see any Rakshasa that can frighten Rama. Be now comforted, this voice is not that of *Arya*, but of somebody else. Somebody for some reason has imitated his voice. He can resist even against the gods, why should he utter this disgraceful cry, 'Save me?' Don't be distressed like a common woman, banish your anxiety and be calm. None has yet been born, nor will any one in future in the three worlds, who can conquer Rama.

"Thereupon Janaki wept and cruelly said, 'Ah, you wicked, you are thinking of winning me after Rama's death, but that desire of yours will never be fulfilled. You have certainly followed Rama as a spy of Bharata,

hence you are not going to his rescue even hearing his cries. You are an enemy in disguise ; it is, therefore, that you are seeking for an opportunity.'

"At these words of Janaki I was beside myself with rage ; so I left the cottage without any further delay."

Hearing these words from Lakshmana's lips, Rama sorrowfully said, "Lakshmana, you have done wrong by coming here without Sita. You have not acted properly by coming out, disobeying my mandate at the angry words of Janaki, knowing that I can resist the Rakshasas. I am rather displeased with you. The Rakshasa that decoyed me in the form of a deer has been killed by my arrows. When he was struck by me, he assumed the form of a Rakshasa wearing bracelets and cried out in my voice. You have left Janaki hearing that cry."

CHAPTER XXVII

RAMA'S LAMENT

As Rama proceeded towards the cottage, he began to stumble on the way and shook in all his limbs. He saw dark portents everywhere and repeatedly questioned Lakshmana about Sita's safety. He hastened towards the cottage being extremely anxious to meet her. Rama reached the cottage with Lakshmana, but found it desolate. He then entered the cottage and hied to the sporting ground of Sita, but there was no Sita. His hairs stood on their ends, and he was overwhelmed with anxiety. Tossing his arms up (in grief) he sought for her hither and thither.

The cottage without Sita looked like a tank in winter shorn of the beauty of the lotus. The trees

seemed to be weeping, flowers were faded, and bereft of their glory, all beasts and birds were mute with sorrow. The cottage looked quite desolate and disturbed. Kusha grass, deer-skins, and twigs of Kusha were scattered hither and thither, as if the sylvan deities left the place in hurry. Rama burst into bitter lamentations at the sight of that empty cottage.

"Has Janaki been carried away by somebody, or is she no more? Who has been satisfied with her blood? Has she concealed herself? Has she gone out for gathering fruits and flowers, or has she left for the stream to fetch water?"

Then Rama with eyes red (with weeping) and being mad with grief searched all possible places for Janaki but could not find her anywhere. He roamed through hills and forests and came on the banks of the rivers and streams, and approaching each object he questioned about Sita:

"O *Kadamwa*, said he, "My darling is quite fond of you, tell me if thou hast seen her? Tell me, O *Bilwa*, hast thou seen whose breasts are round like thy fruits, whose body is soft like tender sprouting leaves, and who was clad in a yellow silken cloth? O *Arjuna*, you were dear to slim Janaki, tell me now whether she is alive or not. O *Maruvaka*, you look beautiful, being covered with leaves and flowers and being twined by creepers. You certainly know where is now Janaki, whose thighs are smooth as thy bark. O *Tilaka*, thou art the chief among trees, the bees hum round you, and thou art an object of Sita's affection; certainly thou knowest where she tarries now. O *Asoka*, you are the

destroyer of grief.¹ I am senseless with grief for Sita, just remove my sorrows by pointing out Sita to me. O Palm, my darling's breast is like your ripe fruits, please tell me if thou hast seen her. Ah, O Rose-Apple, tell me if thou hast met that Sita of golden hue. O *Karnikara*, being adorned with flowers you look quite beautiful today. Gentle Janaki is very fond of you, tell me if thou hast seen her."

Rama thus questioned every tree, such as mango, pomegranate, sandal, sal, *ketaka*, *kadamva*, *vakul*, *kurava*, and roamed through the forest mad with grief.

Rama then questioned the wild animals of the forest regarding Sita. Addressing the woodland fawn, Rama said, "Ah Deer, surely thou knowest gazelle-eyed Sita. Is she now sporting with the does? O Elephant, she whose thighs are round like your trunk is no doubt known to you, tell me if thou hast seen her. O Tiger, the countenance of my darling is beautiful like the moon, now tell me without any hesitation if thou hast seen her anywhere.

"Ah, my lotus-eyed beauty, why dost thou fly away? Just now I have caught your sight! why dost thou not reply to my words from behind the tree? Stop! thou hast grown extremely unkind to me. You never mocked me before, then why dost thou slight me now? My love, I have recognised thee by the yellow silken cloth. Ah, you are running away fast. If thou hast any pity for me, please stop, don't go further.

"Alas! she is not Sita of winning smile. Certainly, carnivorous *Rakshasas* have devoured her tearing up

1 *Soka* means grief, *Asoka*—without grief.

her limbs, or she would not have neglected me thus in my grief. Ah, how lovely was Janaki's nose ! How beautiful were her teeth ! And how tempting were those lips ! That fair countenance, beautiful like the full-moon, was in the jaws of the Rakshasas, and when she shrieked in agony the Rakshasas devoured her soft, fragrant neck adorned with golden chain. Her arms, soft as tender leaves and adorned with ornaments and that shook like tendrils, were eaten up by the Rakshasas. Alas ! it is for the Rakshasas that I left young Sita ! Alas ! although she had friends, yet she was helpless ! Lakshmana, have you met my darling anywhere ? Alas, my love ! Alas, Sita ! where hast thou gone ?"

Rama thus searched for Sita through the forest. Sometimes he ran fast, sometimes he whirled round and round, and became frantic with grief. Thus ceaselessly he paced to and fro through the forest. He could not give up his hope for Sita and he renewed the search with greater vigour.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OCEAN OF GRIEF

Rama long searched for Sita, but could not find her anywhere, and with upraised arms burst into bitter cries, "Brother Lakshmana, where is Sita ? Where has she gone ? Who was stolen her ? Who has devoured her ? My love, if you are bent upon playing jokes with me by hiding yourself behind the trees, please refrain from it. I have been greatly distressed by your absence, come quick to my side. The young fawns with whom you used to play are brooding over your absence with

tearful eyes. Brother, I have Janaki no more. I shall not live in her absence. Father from heaven will surely see me die in grief for Sita, and he will say, 'I am bound by pledge, then why hast thou come here before the expiry of the full term (of banishment)?' And for this fault, he will surely take me to task for my meanness and wilful conduct. Janaki, I am weak, poor and absolutely under your sway. Where hast thou gone casting me aside, as fame leaves the deceitful? Don't leave me, my love, I shall then surely die."

Rama thus lamented bitterly but got no sight of Sita.

Then Lakshmana finding Rama immersed in grief and exhausted like a stork in deep mud, said in sweet consoling words, "O hero, do not be overwhelmed with grief. Let two of us now carefully search for her. Janaki loves to stray about in the woods of yonder hill furnished with beautiful caves, perhaps she has gone there. Or, she has repaired to the lotus-strewn tank, or to the river abounding in fish and its bank covered with canes, or to see how we search for her and to frighten us she has concealed herself somewhere. O worshipful one, don't be sad, let us now search the whole forest."

Then Rama with Lakshmana searched for Sita in the hill, in the valley, in the forest, near the rill, round the lake, but Sita was nowhere.

Rama then addressing Lakshmana said, "My boy, I have not found Sita in the hill."

Lakshmana sorrowfully returned, "As Vishnu rules the world by subduing Vali, so you will recover Sita straying through the Dandaka forest." Thereupon, Rama pathetically said, "My boy, I have sought for her in the

forest, in the hill, in the cave, near the rill, near lotus-strewn pool, but couldn't find Janaki, dearer than life."

Rama then wept bitterly and became crazed with grief. A langour benumbed his limbs, and his understanding became clouded. He heaved long, hot sighs and cried out. "Alas, my love!"

Thereupon, Lakshmana with joined hands tried to console him by various means, but Rama paid no heed to his words and shed an ocean of tears.

Rama then being crazed with grief and love, seemed to behold Sita in his hallucination, and addressing her said, "My love, you are much fond of flowers, why hast thou then covered thyself with Asoka blossoms to incite my grief? Your thighs are well-shaped like the plantain tree and you have concealed them in the plantain grove, but I see them quite distinctly. Janaki, just for joke you have concealed yourself in the *Karnika* grove, but what is sport to one, is death to another. Please refrain from it, it is not consistent with hermitage-life. I now fully realise that you are fond of jests. But come, my large-eyed love, the cottage is desolate without you.

"Lakshmana, perhaps the demons have stolen away Sita, or eaten her up, or she could not have forsaken me seeing me thus distressed. These deer with their tears confirm my suspicion. Alas, devoted Janaki, where hast thou gone? Kaikeyi's desire has been fulfilled. I came out with Sita, but how shall I return alone? People will think me weak and cruel. Janaki's death proves that I have not the least prowess. On my return from the forest when king Janaka will come to enquire after our welfare, how shall I meet him? He will certainly be mortified with grief for not seeing my Sita. Happy is father, for

he had not to suffer this sorrow. Now tell me, brother, how shall I return to Ayodhya ruled by Bharata? I shall not be happy even in heaven without Sita. I shan't be able to live anyhow without Sita, so go back leaving me in the forest, and after embracing Bharata tell him that I have given him permission to rule over the kingdom. After saying this to Bharata, convey my greeting to Kaikeyi, Sumitra and Kausalya in order. I know you never neglect my words. Relate at length about the destruction of Janaki to my mother, and just help her to bear the sorrow."

Lakshmana was greatly pained at these lamentations of Rama, his face grew pale and he was extremely distressed in mind.

Rama was overwhelmed with grief and finding Lakshmana stricken with sorrow heaved a deep, hot sigh and said with tears, "My boy, perhaps there is not a greater sinner than myself on earth. Misfortunes after misfortunes crush my heart and soul. Formerly, I committed many sins through my wayward will, therefore I am reaping the harvest of sorrow now one after another. I have been deprived of kingdom, friends and mother. It is for me that father died. All these recollections crowd in my mind and fill my heart with grief. Brother, I forgot every sorrow by coming into the forest with Janaki, but her separation like fire has rekindled them again.

"Alas, when the Rakshasas carried her off, how piteously she shrieked in fear and how bitterly she wept. Her white round breast, perfumed with yellow sandal-paste, was surely bathed in blood. But, alas, I am not dead yet. The countenance over which waved

her curling hair, from which ever emitted clear, silvery scents, has certainly been shorn of its beauty like the moon under the grip of Rahu. Perhaps, the blood-thirsty Rakshasas have torn into pieces the sweet neck of my darling adorned with gold chain. I was absent from the cottage and during that time they dragged her by force and she cried like a distressed doe.

"Ah, how liberal and sweet she was. At the foot of this hill sitting by me, how smilingly she talked to me! Let us now search for her. She has gone to the Godavari, the best of the streams, for she loved it most, or that lotus-eyed beauty has gone to some pool to gather lotuses, or has entered some blossoming wood resonant with the notes of birds.

"Alas, this is not to be, she won't go anywhere alone out of fear.

"O sun, you see all acts of men, you are witness to all truth and falsehood, now tell me where my darling has gone? O wind, you have free access everywhere and are aware of everything of the three worlds, tell me whether Sita, the glory of her race, is dead or alive? Or, somebody has stolen her? Have you seen her on any path?"

Then heroic Lakshmana seeing Rama thus stupefied with grief said, "*Arya*, banish your despair, let us be up and doing in her search. Energetic people are never borne down by arduous task."

Rama did not pay any heed to the valiant words of Lakshmana, but was cast down with sorrow.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WRATH OF RAMA

Rama addressing Lakshmana entreatingly said, "Go quick to the Godavari and ascertain whether Janaki has gone there to gather the water-lilies."

Being thus addressed by Rama, Lakshmana went to the fair stream Godavari, reconnoitering everything about it. After a short time he came back and said, "*Arya*, I did not find worshipful Sita in any bathing place of the Godavari. I called aloud, but none answered my call. I know not where is that sweet lady, the destroyer of all sorrows."

Rama then himself went to the Godavari and questioned everything near him about Janaki, but none dared disclose the fact that Ravana had stolen away Sita. Rama then being frantic with grief again and again asked the river, the beasts and the birds, but the Godavari made no reply, she was greatly frightened thinking of terrible Ravana.

Rama then in despair told Lakshmana, "My boy, the Godavari does not say anything about Sita. Now what shall I say to king Janaka and how shall I speak of this loss of Janaki to mother? Janaki assuaged all my sorrows of exile, but where is she gone now? In absence of Sita, the nights will surely appear too long to me for want of sleep. If there is any chance of getting Sita, I shall roam through the whole of Janasthana and the valley of the Mandakini. Lo, the deer are casting their glances repeatedly on me, as if they have something to speak to me."

Then turning to the deer, Rama asked with a voice choked with tears, "Tell me, ye deer, where is Janaki?"

Being thus addressed by Rama, the deer stood up, went towards the south along the route through which Sita had been taken away, and as they proceeded, they again and again looked up at the sky and again and again looked on Rama.

Lakshmana noticed their behaviour and read their silent signals, supplying the place of speech. He then said to Rama, "O worshipful lord, when you questioned the deer about Janaki, they stood up and pointed towards the south, let us proceed in that direction, we may perchance find Janaki there, or some mementos of her."

Rama agreed to Lakshmana's proposal and instantly proceeded with him towards the south, surveying all round him carefully, talking of Janaki on their way. When they were going, they came across a bunch of flowers lying on the road-side. At that, heroic Rama said to Lakshmana, "Brother, I gave these flowers to Janaki and which she put on in her tresses. I recognise these to be the same. Perhaps the sun, the wind and the earth have preserved them for my benefit."

Rama then turning to a mountain rill said, "O rill, I have lost my Janaki. Hast thou seen that beauteous damsel in this romantic forest?"

A moment after, turning to the mountain as a lion roars against an humble animal, Rama broke forth in wrath, "Point out to me that damsel of golden limbs and of golden hue or I shall break down your peaks."

But the mountain showed no Janaki, and Rama angrily said, "O hill, I shall reduce you to ashes with all the trees and creepers by my arrows, and none will visit those barren heaps." Then turning to the rill he

said, "If the stream does not speak about my moon-like beauty, I shall dry her up."

Thus while Rama spoke to Lakshmana, as if through his anger he would scorch everything with the fire of his eyes, he saw huge foot-prints of the Rakshasas on the ground. He also saw the foot-prints of Sita as she ran to and fro being chased by the Rakshasas. At a little distance he also found a broken bow, broken quivers, and a broken chariot.

At that sight, Rama with great excitement said, "Behold, Janaki's ornaments are strewn on the ground. There lies her beautiful necklace. Look, the ground is covered with drops of blood, like the spray of liquid gold. Surely, the rovers of night have devoured her. Here occurred a fierce fight between two giants for her. Look, there lies snapped, a beautiful bow, inlaid with pearls and gems. There lies a shattered golden armour, resplendent as the newly-risen sun, adorned with lazulite studs. There lies a broken staff-umbrella with hundred ribs and decked with wreaths. Lo, what large asses with hideous faces and adorned with golden harness have been killed. What a shining flag-staff, bright as flame ! The battle-car is broken and lies upside down.

"What formidable arrows with long, large blades ! There lies the charioteer dead, holding the reins and whip in his hands ! Whose are these, my boy ? Do they belong to the gods or to the demons ? The foot-prints are of a male person, these must be of a rover of night. I have deadly enmity with these cruel villains. They have now either stolen Janaki or eaten her up. Alas ! righteousness could not protect Sita in the forest and the gods were unkind to me.

"My boy, people set at naught Him who is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the world, in spite of His compassion and mercy. Likewise the gods finding me gentle and generous have deemed me weak. My virtues have turned into faults. But henceforth you will behold my change. As the Doomsday-sun rises with fierce glare, so my valour will manifest itself for the destruction of all creatures. It will not be a happy day for the Yakshas, the Rakshasas, the Pisachas, the Kinnaras, or men. I shall overcast the sky with my arrows and smother all and render them quite inert. I will stop the courses of the planets, screen the moon, rob the sun and fire of their glare and cover the world with darkness. I will crush mountains, dry oceans, and destroy all vegetation. If the gods do not return to me Sita, now dead or alive, I will destroy the creation in my wrath. Everybody will presently experience my valour. I will destroy the three worlds with all the Demons, Rakshasas and Pisachas in them."

Saying this, Rama tightened the bark round his loins and gathered his matted lock. His eyes became red with anger, his lips began to quiver. He looked like Rudra about to slay the demon Tripura.

He took up the bow from Lakshmana's hand and by fixing flaming deadly arrows burned in rage like a kindled flame. "Lakshmana," said he, "as none can resist rage, death, time and accidents, so none will be able to withstand my rage."

Rama like the Doomsday-fire was about to destroy the creation, and breathing heavily he looked at the stringed bow.

Before this, Lakshmana had not seen such a change

in Rama. Seeing Rama beside himself with rage, Lakshmana with folded hands and dried up countenance said, "Arya, formerly you were gentle, free from evil intentions and engaged in doing good to others, and it is not becoming of a man like you to renounce your nature. Eternal fame waits on you, as beauty is inseparable from the moon, light from the sun, motion from the wind and forgiveness from the earth. Therefore, it is not proper for you to destroy others for one's crime.

"There lies broken a well-equipped battle-car. I can infer why it is broken. The ground also is rent by the hoofs of the horses and covered with drops of blood. A fierce fight seemed to have taken at this place. This fight was with one warrior, and not with many. I do not find the foot-prints of an army here. So it is not proper to destroy the world for one's crime. Kings, that are just, mete out punishment proportionate to the crime. Arya, you are the shelter and guide of all. Who will approve this outrage on your wife? As the *Bitwiga* priests cannot do any harm to those who have been initiated by them, so the gods, the Gandharvas, the demons, the hills, the rivers won't be able to do anything unpleasant to you. Now, taking the bow in your hand search for the abductor of your wife with me and the hermits. So long we do not find her, we shall vigilantly search hills, forests, streams, caves, lakes, seas, and the land of the gods and the Gandharvas. If the gods do not return your wife peacefully, then do what you consider best. If you do not get back your Janaki by truce, by virtue of your good conduct, morality and modesty, then destroy everything by your gold-feathered arrow resembling the thunderbolt."

CHAPTER XXX

RAMA PACIFIED

Rama, at this, being smitten with grief, began to weep like a helpless creature. Lakshmana then entreated him by the feet and for consoling him said, "O worshipful lord, as the gods obtained nectar, so king Dasaratha got you after great penance and sacrifice. I have heard from Bharata that father died for you. If you be nervous and so distressed, then patience cannot be expected of ordinary people. Please compose yourself. Who is not visited by misfortune? It burns one like fire, but is soon extinguished. In short, this is the destiny of every corporal being and it must be admitted that this is ordained by Heaven. You see, king Yayati first went to heaven, but subsequently he fell from it. The priest of our family, Vasishtha, had hundred sons but he lost them in one day. She who is the mother of all, and is adored of all, that mother Earth quakes at times, and those that are the images of righteousness, and the eyes of the world, themselves suffer from eclipse. In short, mighty creatures and gods also have to suffer misfortunes. It is said that even Indra and other gods are subject to pleasure and pain. So do not be overwhelmed. Even if Janaki be dead, you should not lament like an ordinary man. Those who are wise like you and can see everything and coolly ascertain the cause, bear patiently even in great distress. Do thou, therefore, decide your course of action by your reason. Intelligent people can apprehend what is good and what is evil. Hardly any happiness ensues from the performance of such acts that are of uncertain issue, and whose nature is unknown. O hero, it is you who gave me all

such counsels before. Who will presume to advise you? Even Vrihaspati is incapable of that. Even the gods cannot measure thy intelligence which is now clouded in sorrow. You possess both natural and supernatural powers, now by marshalling them get ready for the destruction of your enemy. What necessity is there for destroying all, destroy him who is the real enemy."

Rama who could easily grasp the pith of everything, agreed to Lakshmana's reasonable proposal. He subdued his rage and said to Lakshmana, "Tell me, brother, what shall we do now? Where shall we go? Just think of the means by which we can find out Janaki."

Lakshmana replied, "*Arya*, this is Janasthana. The place is full of Rakshasas and covered with trees and creepers. Here are hill-fortresses, cleft rocks and caves full of wild animals. The Kinnaras and the Gandharvas live here. Let us carefully search the place. In calamities, a man like you should remain unmoved like a hill undisturbed by the course of wind."

Then Rama with Lakshmana began to search for Sita. At one place he found Jatayu lying in a pool of blood. At that sight Rama exclaimed, "My boy, this wretch has devoured my Janaki. Surely, it is a Rakshasa roaming in the forest in the form of a bird. He is now taking rest after devouring Sita. I shall kill him immediately with my sharp arrow."

Saying this, Rama angrily fixed a deadly shaft to his bow, as if shaking the earth and the sea by his angry treads.

When Rama came near, Jatayu vomiting frothy blood piteously said, "Ah, hero, may you live long!

Whom you are searching in the forest like the medicinal herb that may restore life has been robbed by mighty Ravana along with my life. She was defenceless and at that opportunity that wicked villain carried her off by force. When he saw that I had come forward for her protection, he threw me down on the ground. These are his bow, quivers, umbrella, car, which I broke down by my kicks, and killed the charioteer by striking him with my claws. But when I became exhausted, he cut off my wings and carried away Sita through the sky. I have been already wounded by the Rakshasa, so spare me now."

When Rama got this information of Sita from Jatayu his grief was doubly increased, and throwing aside his bow and arrow he embraced Jatayu rolling on the earth and began to weep. Then Lakshmana fell prostrate by the side of a thorny path and began to shed tears with deep long sighs. Rama was pained at that sight and softly began, "My boy, loss of kingdom, exile in the forest, loss of Sita and death of Jatayu are the decrees of Fate. To speak the truth, my bad luck can even burn fire itself. If I enter the ocean, through my bad luck it will become dry. Perhaps, there is not a more unlucky man in the world than myself. It is due to my ill luck that father is dead."

Saying this, Rama with filial affection began to touch Jatayu's body and embracing him said, "Tell me, where is my Janaki?" And thus saying he fell upon the earth.

CHAPTER XXXI

DEATH OF JATAYU

Then Rama, darling of the people, said, "Lakshmana, this king of the birds¹ has died for my work. His voice has grown faint, his end is nigh and he is staring with dim, blank eyes. O Jatayu, if you have any more power of speech, tell me how have you met with this fate? What harm have I done to Ravana? Why has he stolen my Sita? What did Janaki say? How mighty is Ravana? How he looks? What he does and where does he live?"

Then pious Jatayu replied, "My boy, wicked Ravana, creating storm and darkness by magic, carried off Sita through the sky. When I grew greatly exhausted in the fight, he clipped my wings and flew to the south. O Rama, the breath of my life is about to flee. I see before me trees of gold having hair resembling the Ushir grass. The moment, when Ravana carried away Sita is called *Vindya*. Whoever takes away anything (dishonestly) on this moment soon meets with his destruction like a fish devouring a hook, and the owner in no time gets back his lost property. But Ravana could not know this at that time. So don't be overwhelmed with grief for Sita. You will soon recover her."

When dying Jatayu was saying this, he began to vomit blood with particles of mucus.

1 Bird he cannot be. Was there any tribe known as the *Vihangas* (bird)? Perhaps they got this appellation for decorating their bodies with feathers, as are seen among the Red Indians. Apparently some of the non-Aryan tribes of India were described as serpents, etc., as the *Nagas*.

"Son of Visvastava, brother of Kuvera," he said but his voice was choked.

"Speak, speak," cried Rama in great excitement with folded hands but Jatayu expired that very moment. His head rolled on the dust and he lay prostrate on the ground.

When copper-eyed Jatayu, huge as a mountain, died, Rama broke forth in deep sorrow, "Lakshmana, one who lived for a long time in the Dandaka forest infested by the Rakshasas, who was quite energetic in spite of his great age, is now lying dead. How inexorable is Death. This helpful king of the birds has met with death for rescuing Sita. He has died only for me, casting aside his vast ancestral territory. Virtuous persons are among all castes and people ; even amongst the birds are found some honest ones giving shelter to the distressed seeking protection. I have been greatly pained. He is adorable to me like king Dasaratha. Now gather woods for his cremation, I shall myself set fire to the funeral pyre of him who has died for me. O fatherly Jatayu, may you attain that high region that is reached by the heroes who are not afraid of entering the field of battle, that is attained by the giver of lands, by the performers of sacrifices and by those who keep sacred fire always alive¹ in the family. Ah, hero, I am myself setting fire to the pyre, may you attain excellent regions hereafter."

Saying this, Rama placed Jatayu on the funeral pyre as one would do to his kinsman.

1 Something like fire-worship as found in the Zoroastrian creed.

Then with Lakshmana, Rama entered the forest, slaughtered some deer and taking off their meat he offered *pindas* to Jatayu and fed the birds with them by placing them on soft turfs. Then Rama recited those *mantras* that are done by the Brahmanas for the attainment of heaven by the dead. He then went to the Godavari with Lakshmana, and after bathing in the stream performed in due form the watery rites in honour of the dead. Jatayu met with death at the hands of the Rakshasa after achieving an arduous and glorious deed, and being cremated by saintly Rama he attained heavenly bliss.

After this, Rama and Lakshmana, armed with bows, quivers and swords set out in quest of Janaki and proceeded towards the south-west direction.

CHAPTER XXXII

KAVANDHA

They proceeded through a dense dreary forest covered with trees and creepers and unvisited by man. They hurriedly passed through it and entered deep and inaccessible Krauncha forest six miles from Janasthana. It was dark like a deep blue cloud and full of wild animals and birds, and there were flowers of various bright colours. Issuing from the Krauncha forest, after a distance of six miles, they arrived at the dreadful abode of elephants. There the woods grew very dense and it abounded with ferocious animals. There they saw a deep cave like a fathomless abyss. On coming near the cave, they espied a loathsome and hedious Rakshashi whose sight was enough to terrify the weak. She was tall, her belly hanging, teeth sharp, hair dishevelled and

skin rough. She eschewing a piece of flesh came near them and embraced Lakshmana ahead of the two saying, "Come, let us dally in amorous sports. My name is Ayomukhee. You are my dear lover. I am also like a gem to you. Come, my lord, live with me happily for ever in these mountain fastnesses and on the banks of the stream."

Lakshmana was greatly enraged at this and cut off her nose, ears and breast. The Rakshashi fled away uttering terrible yells in agony.

Thereafter, they proceeded courageously to a dense forest. Then gentle Lakshmana with joined hands respectfully said to Rama, "My arms are throbbing intensely, a great anxiety weighs upon my mind. I see evil portents around me. Please be on guard, do not neglect my words. I apprehend some danger from these evil omens. But from the cries of the fearful Banyulaka bird, I think that some evil will attend upon us soon."

As the two brothers were looking for Sita, they heard a terrific sound. The whole forest seemed to be panic-stricken at that. Thereupon, Rama instantly took up his sword and proceeded carefully to ascertain its cause. In front of them they found a formidable Rakshasa; with a very spacious chest having no head or neck. His mouth was set on his belly, and there was only one eye on his brow. With long lashes, yellow in colour, it was dreadful and burning like a flame of fire. He was dark like a cloud and huge as a hill, with arms long as a league. His body was covered with bristling hair, and his tongue was protruding through his enormous teeth. With terrible roar like a thundering cloud he was

feasting upon fierce lions, tigers, bears and other wild animals and birds.

That formidable Rakshasa, seeing Rama and Lakshmana, obstructed their way. Then they stepped aside and began to survey him.

Then the Rakshasa stretching his hands got hold of the two brothers and began to crush them with his might. They were being forcibly dragged. Heroic Rama, patient by nature, was not least affected by it, but Lakshmana was greatly distressed and sorrowfully said to Rama, "Lo! I am being overpowered by the Rakshasa, now run away by offering me as a victim. You will perhaps soon get back Janaki and when you get back your kingdom, just remember me occasionally."

Rama answered, "My brave brother, don't be frightened for nothing. A man like you is never overwhelmed by danger."

Then that cruel Kavandha said, "Who are you? With your bows and swords and with broad shoulders you look like bulls with sharp horns. Tell me, what business you have come here for? You have quite accidentally come within my sight. I am hungry, so there is no escape for you."

Rama, at this, said to terrified Lakshmana, "We are suffering misfortune after misfortune, but now we are in the peril of our life. Fate is quite inexorable, and nothing is impossible in the decree of fate. We too are now borne down by disaster. Even the heroes sometimes give way in fight like bridges of sand."

Having said this, Rama stood there in calm courage.

Kavandha then encircling Rama and Lakshmana by the arm asked, "Ah, Kshatriya boys, are you standing

here seeing me hungry ? Ah, foolish chaps, fate has sent you as my food."

Then Lakshmana to display his valour told Rama, "*Arya*, this low Rakshasa will soon seize us. Let us now without delay cut off his two huge arms with sword. I see his strength lies in his arms. It is ignominious for a Kshatriya to kill one who cannot use arms and hence defenceless like an animal brought for sacrifice. We should not, therefore, put an end to the life of this Rakshasa."

Hearing these words Kavandha flew into rage. He opened his mouth and tried to devour them. At that moment, Rama cut off his right arm and Lakshmana his left. Kavandha fell down by uttering a terrific yell. He asked who they were. Thereupon Lakshmana said, "O Rakshasa, he is heroic Rama of the Ikshwaku line, and I am his younger brother. Mother stood in the way of his installation to the throne and sent him to exile. This is why god-like mighty Rama is residing in the forest with me and his wife. In this state, when he was absent a Rakshasa has carried off his wife. We are out in search of her. Now tell me who are you with your flaming mouth set in the chest. Why do you roam about as a headless monster ?"

Kavandha then remembered the words of Indra and then cheerfully welcoming them said, "O hero, fortunately I have met you, fortunately my arms have been cut, let me now tell how through my insolence I have undergone this hideous metamorphosis.

"Rama, I was beautiful like Indra and like the sun and the moon, but I used to frighten the *Rishis* by assuming the form of a formidable Rakshasa. Once

upon a time, a hermit, named Sthulashira, was gathering wild fruits and roots. I snatched these from him assuming this form. At this, the *Rishi* was greatly enraged and he cursed me saying that henceforth I would be as cruel and hideous as the assumed guise.

"Then I entreated him again and again for the expiation of that curse. Then the *Rishi* said, 'When Rama will cut off your arm and burn you in the forest, you will get back your former beautiful form.'

"Lakshmana, I am Danu, the son of Sri Danava. The form that you see is due to the curse of Indra. Once I performed great penance, thereupon Grand Sire Brahma granted me long life as a boon, and I grew proud in consequence of that. I thought since I was to live long, Indra could do nothing to me. Being elated with this thought, I challenged Indra in a fight. Indra with his thunderbolt pressed inside my body, my head and thighs I prayed humbly for life, so he did not kill me and said, 'Let Brahma's wish be fulfilled.' I then said, 'You have shattered my thighs and head by the thunderbolt, how am I to live henceforward?' Indra then set two long arms and a mouth with sharp teeth in my belly. I seize wild animals with my long arms and eat them. Indra at that time said that when in a fight Rama and Lakshmana would cut off your two arms, you would then attain heaven.

"Arya, I used to take everything that I could seize with my hands. I thought that once Rama and Lakshmana would come within my clutch and they would destroy my body. O hero, thou art that Rama. May good betide you. Sthulashira told me that none but Rama would be able to destroy me and that has come

to be true. Now set fire to my body, I shall give you good advice and show you a helping friend."

Rama then said, "Kavandha, I was out with Lakshmana in Janasthana and during our absence Ravana has stolen away my chaste wife Sita. I have only come to know the name of that wicked villain but I do not know anything about his residence, age, prowess or how he looks. We are now roaming about in helpless state, please do us some favour. O hero, we shall dig a big hole here and burn your corpse by collecting dry wood broken by the trunks of the elephants. Tell me who has carried away my Sita. If you know the truth, do me the favour by stating it."

Thereupon Kavandha answered, "Prince, I don't know Janaki, I have not that supernatural power of knowledge now. I shall resume my former shape after death and shall then tell you who knows about her. I have lost that divine foresight on account of my curse, so before I am reduced to ashes, I won't be able to know which formidable Rakshasa has carried off your wife. So you first duly cremate my body before the sun goes down. I shall then name to you a person who knows everything about the Rakshasas. Make friendship with him. He is just, and you will get great help from him in your present circumstances. There is nothing unknown to him in the three worlds. Once upon a time, for some reason, he actually travelled through the three worlds."

Then a funeral pyre was prepared in a hollow of the hill. Lakshmana set fire to it and fire began to burn that huge fatty body like a lump of butter.

After a while, Kavandha cheerfully rose from the

flame. He was clad in a white piece of cloth, his body was decked with beautiful ornaments and an excellent garland hung from his neck. He got upon an effulgent car yoked with swans and ascending the sky said :

"Rama, listen to me as to how you will get back Sita. On earth there are only six ways of attaining one's object as peace and war.¹ One who is in distress should mix with another like him. Now with Lakshmana you are in distress and have been suffering from the loss of your wife. So in these circumstances make friendship with one who is equally distressed like you. Besides this, I do not see any other means of your attaining success.

"Rama, there is a mighty monkey named Sugriva. He was begotten by the sun unto the wife of Riksharaja. Vali, the son of Indra, is his brother. He has driven off Sugriva from the kingdom. He is now dwelling on the Rishyamukha hill on the bank of the Pampa along with four other monkeys. He is modest, intelligent, gentle, capable, effulgent and of firm determination. He will be a friend and help to you in your quest for Sita. Don't be overwhelmed with grief. Fate is inexorable ; what is to be, must be. So leave this place quickly. To avoid all evil, immediately contract friendship in the presence of sacred fire. Don't despise him because he is a *Vanara*. He is grateful, helping and capable of assuming different forms at will. You will get great help from him, or at least he will never be in-

1 The six political means of attaining object :—*Sandhi*—peace ; *Vigraha*—war ; *Yan*—military expedition ; *Ashana*—halting ; *Daidhibhava*—sowing dissension among the enemies ; *Samashraya*—seeking protection.

different to your work. He now roams near the bank of the Pampa in fear of Vali who has driven him away.

"Rama, go now and placing thy weapons in the presence of attesting fire in solemn truth, contract friendship with that denizen of the forest. He knows everything about the Rakshasas and nothing in the three worlds is unknown to him. So long the sun shines, he will search for Sita at every possible place, hills, dales, caves and streams with his Vanara followers. He will send great Vanara chiefs in different directions and search for Sita in Ravana's palace, bewailing for you. Whether Janaki be on the peak of the Sumeru or in the nether region under the earth, this lord of the Vanaras will kill that villain and give back your Sita to you."

CHAPTER XXXIII

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

After telling Rama the means of finding out Sita, Kavandha gave directions about the route saying, "Rama, this is the best path that leads to the place abounding in rose-apples, mangoes, figs, Jakas, Tridukas, Karnikaras, blue Asokas, red Sandals, Kadamvas, Tilakas, Karavirs, Naktamals, Nagkesharas, Agnimukhyas and Mandar trees. Eat their sweet delicious fruits either by climbing upon the trees or by bending their boughs. After passing through that wood you will reach another forest like the heavenly garden Nandan. All this seasons exist there as in Chaitraratha—the garden of Kuvera.

"Thus passing through hills and dales you will arrive at the bank of the Pampa lake. It is free from gravel and weeds, is strewn with sands, so not at all slippery.

It is resonant with the notes of aquatic birds and swans. They are not afraid of man, since they do not know anything like slaughter. You feed upon those fatty birds plump as a lump of butter. There are excellent fishes in that lake as Rohit and Chakratandu. Devoted Lakshmana will kill them with shafts and after removing their scales and fins will roast them for you. The water of the Pampa is clear like crystal, sweet, scented with the fragrance of lotuses and very pleasant to drink. Lakshmana will fetch it for your drink in cups made of lotus-leaf. Huge boars live there in mountain-caves and they bellow like bulls after quenching their thirst. Rama, you will feel consoled at the sight of the Pampa, Tilakas, Naktamals, red and white lotuses bloom there. There is none to gather those flowers. Those flowers never wither. It was the residence of the disciples of Matanga. Drops of perspiration fallen from them while collecting fruits for their preceptor have bloomed into flowers. They are now dead, but still there lives a pious nun named Savari. This pious woman was their servant. You are divine, adorable of all. Savari will attain heaven at your sight.

"Rama, you will find the hermitage of Matanga on the west bank of the Pampa. Wild elephants do not dare to cross the threshold of his asylum. You will feel happy in that romantic place. The Rishyamukha hill is at a little distance from the Pampa. It abounds in various kinds of flower-trees, and being surrounded by young snakes nobody dares to cull flowers from them. The hill was formerly created by Brahma. Wonderful is its power of gift. Whatever riches one may seem to

get in his dream sleeping over this mountain, on his awaking from sleep he finds actually possessing them. If any sinful person climbs upon it, the Rakshasas beat him instantly. The noise of the young elephants sporting in the Pampa is constantly heard in that hill. Tigers, bears and gentle Rurus of sapphire hue are found there. There is an immense cave in that hill. It is very difficult to enter it ; you will find a beautiful tank in front of that cave. Its banks are adorned with various kinds of fruits and flower-trees. Pious Sugriva with other Vanaras live there, and sometimes resides on the peak of the hill."

Under the sky Kavandha with a bright garland shone like a sun and as he was about to ascend, Rama and Lakshmana said, "Go to the blissful heaven."

Kavandha replied, "Go to your own business and make friendship with Sugriva."

CHAPTER XXXIV

SAVARI

Rama and Lakshmana then followed the route indicated by Kavandha for meeting Sugriva.

They proceeded towards the west and found various trees heavy with sweet fruits on the hill. The sun set on their way and they passed the night on the hill. On the morning, they arrived at the western bank of the Pampa. There was situated the romantic hermitage of pious Savari covered with various trees.

Seeing that, they approached Savari. As soon as that pious nun saw them, she stood up with folded hands. She with great reverence bowed to them and with due rites offered them water to wash their feet.

Rama then addressing Savari said, "O venerable lady of sweet speech, have you conquered all the obstacles that stand in the way of penance? Are you not progressing in your ascetic rites? Have you subdued your anger? Don't you practise control over food? How do you enjoy mental felicity? Are not all rules duly observed? Has thy service towards the superiors been consummated with success?"

Then aged Savari of accomplished penance, approved by the Siddhas, came forward and said :

"Rama, seeing you today I feel that my penance has attained its consummation, blessed is my birth and successful is my devotion to superiors. I shall attain heaven by worshipping you today. Since you have sanctified me by your gentle look, I shall surely attain eternal heaven by your grace. All the ascetics whom I used to serve have repaired in excellent chariots from their hermitages to the heavenly region as soon as you set your foot on the Chitrakuta hill. Those virtuous ascetics at the time of their departure told me that Rama would one day come to this sacred asylum, and asked me to receive Rama and Lakshmana with due rites of hospitality.

"Rama, following those words of the hermits I have brought fruits and flowers for you from the bank of the Pampa."

Thereupon, Rama said to Savari, cognisant of the past, present and future, "I have heard from Danu about the glory of the ascetics. I wish to witness, with my own eyes, your attainment of that heavenly bliss."

Savari then said, "Rama, look, there the vast

Matanga forest, full of beasts and birds, deep as a dense cloud. In this forest the holy hermits cast off their sacred bodies into burning flame by uttering *Mantras*. There stands the altar Pratyakshasthali, there my reverend spiritual guides used to collect flowers, their hands shaking from fatigue. Behold, the altar is even now surrounded by the halo of their spiritual glory. They could not travel on account of their langour due to continual fasting. Look, there the seven seas appeared as soon as they were invoked. The barks that used to hang after bath on the branches of the trees for drying have not dried as yet. The lotuses and other flowers with which they used to worship the gods have not yet withered. Rama, thou hast seen all, heard all, permit me now to cast off my body. I shall go to them to whom belongs this hermitage and whom I used to serve."

Rama was greatly pleased at these pious words of Savari. "It is indeed wonderful," exclaimed Rama, my noble lady, you have shown me due honour. Go now wherever you like to repair."

Then infirm Savari with matted lock and clad in deer-skin, with the permission of Rama, cast her body into burning flame.¹

1 The world-renowned scientist Dr. Mitchnikoff in his "Nature of man" has devoted a long chapter about the universal fear of death. There he has shown that old people are more afraid of death than the young ones (of course, there are enough reasons for it), but in ancient India we find a glorious exception to this where a man prepared himself for death and when the supreme moment came, he gave up his ghost in cheerful resignation. At the far end of life a saint might sometimes cast off his mortal

She then rose from the flame with an effulgent body glowing like fire. Celestial ornaments and jewels shone on her body and a sweet-scented heavenly garland hung from her neck. Being robed in heavenly apparel she became exceedingly beautiful and illumined the whole place by the halo of her glory like the glare of lightning. Then through *Samadhi* she reached that blissful region inhabited by great saints.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE JOURNEY

When Savari ascended heaven by virtue of her great penance, Rama thought about the great supernatural power of the saints, and after some time addressing Lakshmana said :

"My boy, this asylum abounds in deer, tigers and other animals; various kinds of birds are chirping here and the place abounds in wonderful things. I have witnessed these miracles with my own eyes and after bathing in the waters of the seven seas have performed in due form the watery rites to the manes of the ancestors. I think, my misfortunes have ensued and for this my mind seems to be filled with delight. Let us now repair to the romantic Pampa.

"The Rishyamukha hill is at a little distance from the Pampa. There Sugriva, the son of Surya, resides with four other Vanaras in fear of Vali. I am eager to meet him soon, for the quest of Janaki is entirely in his hands."

frame by the *yogic* concentration of his soul. This is not suicide, but a glorious resurrection, so to say. It is like the rising of the Phoenix, the self-begotten and self-perpetuating bird, in new splendour from the ashes !

Lakshmana replied, "I am too desirous to see the Pampa. Let us, therefore, start without any further delay."

Rama then set out with Lakshmana and proceeded towards the distant-flowing Pampa, surveying all round him, the tall flowery trees, the curlews, peacocks, parrots, wood-peckers crying in the dale and flying through brakes. They, after some time, arrived at Matangasara, a part of the Pampa,¹ and from a distance witnessed the Pampa. The stream of the Pampa was beautiful to see. Its crystal water strewn with blooming lotuses, its banks covered with soft sands and fringed with green vegetation, greeted their eyes. Fishes were swimming in its deep water displaying their silvery fins, and tortoises were floating upon the surface of the stream. Part of the lake was copper-red with crimson lotuses, part of it was white with lilies, and part of it blue with the azure blossoms of Kuvalaya.² On account of its various hues the stream appeared like a variegated blanket-cover of an elephant. Its banks were girt with blooming Asokas, Punnagas, Vakulas, Tilakas and Uddala trees, and there stood picturesque gardens, where the creepers clung round the trees like a darling's embrace. Its flowery valley was ever haunted by the Kinnaras, Gandharvas, Urugas, Yakshas and the Rakshasas.

Rama at the sight of the beautiful Pampa was

1 The Sanskrit commentator of the epic says that Pampa is the name both of a lake and a rill that flows into the lake.

2 Blue lotus.

smitten with grief for Sita, and addressing Lakshmana said :

"Lakshmana, this lovely stream of Pampa, being girt with various blossoming trees and lovely creepers, appears like a beauty decked in jewels. There stands on its bank the Rishyamukha tinged with the hues of various metals as mentioned by Kavandha. There resides Sugriva, the son of the great Riksharaja. Now, we may go to him without delay. I cannot bear the pangs of Sita's separation any more. O Lakshmana, how shall I live without Sita ? I have been deprived of my kingdom, I am really poor, and Sita is my wife. Alas ! I know not whether Janaki will survive this separation or not."

Thus lamenting Rama, smitten with sorrow and love for Sita, proceeded slowly towards the beautiful Pampa bright with lotuses, and adorned on all sides by flowery woods, resounding with the sweet notes of various birds.

THE END OF THE ARANYA KANDAM

Volume II



CHAPTER I

THE LAKE PAMPA

Rama, with Lakshmana, having repaired to Pampa, full of lotuses and fishes, began to lament with an oppressed heart. No sooner had he cast his eyes upon Pampa than he was stirred up with a mixed emotion of sorrow and joy, and being agitated with passion said, "Look, my boy ! How crystal lucid is the water of Pampa, like liquid gem of the bluest hue, and how red lotuses have bloomed in it ! What lovely woods fringe its banks, and how the trees with their branches appear like the peaks of a hill ! These are the haunts of various beasts and birds. Though I have been greatly afflicted with sorrow for the loss of Sita and at the thought of Bharata's sufferings, yet this beautiful Pampa gladdens my sight. Look, how the deep green turf strewn with blossoms of diverse hues, loosened from their stalks, appear like a beautiful chequered blanket spread on the grass. Here and there, lovely creepers, adorned with bunches of flowers, are embracing the topmost branches of the trees laden with blossoms. My darling ! It is now spring, the season of love. See, how gently the breeze is blowing, the flowers are in their bloom, and the forest is fragrant with their odour. Look, how the flowery woods rain their blossoms like drops of rain from the cloud. The trees being shaken by the breeze are shedding their flowers, and the rocky ledges are covered with them. The wind seems to be sporting with the flowers ; see how many of them it has thrown on the ground, how many are still falling, and how

many hung on the trees. The sportive wind by shaking the branches laden with blossoms is driving off the bees which pursue its course with loud hummings. Hark, what a deep music the wild wind makes as it rushes out of the caves, and how the cuckoos with their songs are teaching the trees to a dance. The fresh, bracing air is delightfully cool and fragrant like sandal, and it removes all fatigue and languor. The trees are being united with one another having their branches inter-laced by the motion of the wind, and the bees are humming on them, being intoxicated by the smell of wild honey. The peaks with blossoming trees on their crests appear to have put on diadems on their heads. Look, how the Cassius is covered with golden blossoms, like one decked in gold and clothed in yellow robes ! O, Saumitri, as I am now without Janaki, this spring pains me more, and ruthless love smites me all the while. Hark, as if the cuckoos are mocking me with their sweet notes. Hear the Datyuha birds warbling at the fountain-side. Their sweet notes afflict me very much. Formerly, Janaki hearing these notes from the cottage called me by her side and expressed her great delight.

"To ! The birds of diverse notes are chirping in the forest and are perched on the branches of the trees. Look, how in each flock, the birds with their mates are cooing in joy, like the sweet humming of the bees. The trees have been rendered vocal by the amorous murmurs of the Datyugas and by the cries of the male cuckoos. The spring, like fire, is scorching me most—

the red Asokas are its embers, the hum of the bees is its (whizzing) sound, and the coppery leaves are its flame ! Lakshmana, since I no more behold my sweet-tongued Sita with fair eyes and lovely hair, then of what use is this life to me ? This vernal season, when the wood blooms and resounds with the cuckoo's notes, was most dear to Sita, and her love will soon burn away my soul. I find the lovely trees with their blossoms around me but not Sita amongst them ! Alas ! This spring has rekindled my grief for Sita. I am being consumed by her thoughts, so vernal breeze cannot fan me cool.

"Lakshmana ! Look, how the frantic peacocks, with their hens, are dancing in joy, spreading their tails, glowing like crystal window-lattices. They are aggravating my pain of separation. Look, how the pea-hen dances in amorous joy seeing the pea-cock dancing on the cliff, and the pea-cock spreading its beautiful wings is approaching his mate emitting a shrill cry, as if, in jest. Look, how the hen, being smitten by love, follows the pea-cock. There is love even amongst the birds. Surely, no Rakhasa has brought Sita here, or the peacocks would not have danced in joy. If large-eyed Janaki were not carried away, she too would have been smitten with such an amorous longing.

"Lakshmana ! Look, how the flowers in consummate bloom fall on the ground with bees humming on them, and how the birds welcome one another with warbling notes, exciting all amorous thoughts. If the vernal season comes where my Janaki is now confined, she

will certainly pine like me. Even if the spring does not appear there, still Sita will not survive my absence, or it might be that spring has appeared there while she is being oppressed by the enemy. But what will she do ? Certainly, my darling of a slender make, of sweet accents, of golden hue, and having eyes like the petals of a lotus will die in this spring. I am sure, she will not survive my separation : in truth, we were deeply attached to one another.

"O Lakshmana ! I am ever thinking of Janaki and this sweet cool breeze, scented with the fragrance of vernal flowers, appears like fire to me. "The sweet breeze that I loved so much in company of Janaki is causing me great pain in her absence. Formerly, this bird which cried from the sky¹, now caws delightfully from the top of the tree ; so it once presaged my separation from Sita, but now it foretells my reunion with her.

"Look, how the birds perched on the flower-trees are delighting all by their sweet minstrels. The blooming Tilaka, being tossed by the wind, appears like a beauty reeling with wine, and the bees are hastily darting at her. This Asoka, incentive to amorous desires, is remonstrating with me with its clusters of blossoms shaken by the breeze.

"Look, there is the mango-tree in blossoms, like a

i When the bird, apparently a raven, cried overhead, it was an omen indicating his impending separation and when it was perched on the tree near Rama and is cawing in delight it is a happy augury that Sita will be soon restored to him.

gaily decorated beauty smitten with amorous desires. Look at the Kinnaras roaming about hither and thither. The swans and *chakravakas* are sporting in the crystal stream of Pampa. Deer and elephants have come for drink. Look, how the red lotuses—each like a crimson dawn—have bloomed in it, and the surface of the water is covered with their pollens cast off by the bees. Quite charming is the beauty of Pampa, and the woods that fringe its banks are most romantic. Look, how the lotuses tossed by the wind repeatedly dash against the ripples.

“Lakshmana ! I can no longer live without that lotus-eyed beauty, fond of lotuses. Oh, how cruel is Cupid. There is no possibility of getting her soon, but it is Love that is reviving her dear image in my mind. I could have resisted the pangs of amorous love, had not the Spring oppressed me thus with its blossoms and leaves.

“Things that were dear during my union with Sita have lost all charm in her absence. Neither the lotus-bud, nor the red Palasha blossom delights my eye. Mark the lotus-petal is like my Sita's eye, and the breeze issuing from the trees carrying the lotus scent by touching its filaments, is like the sweet breath of Sita.

“Lakshmana ! Look, how charming the Cassius looks in its blossoms over the hill on Pampa's southern bank. That hill is rich in minerals, and its table-land is illumined with the red Kinsuka flowers, devoid of leaves.¹ Look, there have bloomed Malati, Mallika, Hibiscus,

¹ *Budtea Frondosa* in which brilliant red flowers appear before the leaves.

Karavi, Ketaki, Sindhuvara, Vasanti, Matulinga, Purna, Kunda, Naktamala, Madhuka, Vakulas Canes, Champaka, Naga, red and blue Asokas, Lodhra brown like the manes of a lion, Ankula. Kurunta, Churnaka, Paribhadra, Mango, Patala, Kovidara, Muchukunda, Arjuna, Ubdalaka, Sirisha, Sinsapa, Dhava, Salmali, Kinsuka, red Kuruvaka, Tulasi, Sandal, Shyandam, Hintal and Tilaka. These beautiful trees are covered with creepers, and their branches being shaken by the breeze, the creepers appear to embrace them repeatedly like beautiful women intoxicated with wine.

"My boy! The wind having tested different sweet things is blowing from hill to hill, from tree to tree in delight. Look, some of the trees are covered with sweet-scented flowers, while some of them are adorned with sweet green buds. The thirsty bees, saying, "this is sweet," "this is full-blown," sit on each and every flower and then hastily leave it in search of fresh honey and thus the ground has been covered with blossoms fallen from the trees. The cliffs being covered with blue and yellow flowers appear as if wrapped with a variegated blanket. Look, what a profusion of flowers bloom in the spring, as if the trees are vying with each other in their floral wealth, and their branches are covered with clusters of flowers, and the bees are humming on them. There a swan sports with his mate in the lucid water of Pampa, causing me great pain. How beautiful is this stream. I now find that the reputation of its beauty is in no way exaggerated. If I can now find Sita and live with her on the bank of Pampa I do not crave for

Ayodhya or of the kingdom of heaven. Surely, all desires and appetites would have been gratified if I could dally with Sita on its emerald green. I am pining for the separation from Sita, and the vernal wood, with its rich blossoms and leaves, is causing me very great pain.

"O, how exquisitely beautiful is Pampa ! Its glassy stream is covered with lilies, and various aquatic birds sport in the water. These gay birds remind me of Sita. There the herd of deer reminds me of gazelle-eyed Sita. Her thoughts make me quite restless and sad. I shall only be happy if I find Sita there on the hill, or if that beauty of slim waist breathes this fresh air of Pampa along with me, and then only I shall live. Only the blessed people enjoy the lotus-scented breeze of the Pampa.

"O Saumitri ! I don't know how Janaki is living under another's subjection. What shall I say when king Janaka and others will enquire after her welfare ? I know not where she is, who has followed this unlucky self to the forest purely from a sense of duty. Being deprived of kingdom I lost my sense, but she cheered me up by her company. How shall I live now in separation ? Alas ! Janaki's eyes are beautiful like a lotus, and always a sweet, half-suppressed smile hovers on her lips whenever she speaks. Now, my heart sinks, not beholding the lotus-scented countenance of that faultless beauty. Her accents are distinct, clear, sensible and sweet. When shall I hear them again ? That chaste lady, though suffering greatly from this exile in the forest, yet always talked to me sweet things, like a

cheerful friend. Alas ! What shall I say when mother will enquire about Janaki ? Go back and meet Bharata full of fraternal love, I shall not be able to live in absence of Janaki."

Thus finding Rama weeping like a desolate creature Lakshmana consoled him with cogent words, "O worshipful one ! Just restrain your sorrow, and good will betide you. People, even without any stain of vice, lose their intelligence when overwhelmed with grief. Considering that sorrow is consequent upon separation, forget thy attachment for your dear one. When the wick is moist, it burns with very little oil. O worshipful lord, if Ravana hides himself within the dark hollow of the earth, he won't be saved. Now try to gather information about him. If he hides himself with Sita within the womb of Diti—the mother of the Asuras—I shall surely kill him, if he do not return Sita to you. Shake off that low despondency and bear up patiently. Nobody can retrieve lost wealth without endeavour. Energy is the chief requisite for performing an act, and there is no greater power than energy. Everything in this world is accessible to an energetic man ; and nothing can dishearten him, by resorting to energy, we shall recover Sita. Banish your sorrow and amorous longing. You are wise and noble, why do you forget this ?"

Then, Rama thinking Lakshmana's advice to be sound, restrained his sorrows and in slow gait, but with an anxious heart, walked along the bank of Pampa, covered with trees shaken by the wind. On their way, they surveyed all caves and brooks carefully. Heroic Laksh-

mana followed Rama, ever thinking of the means as to how Rama could be consoled, and he tried to cheer him up all the way by moral and heroic discourses.

At that time, the chief of the monkeys was roaming about in the Rishyamuka mountain and behold these two mighty princes. He was greatly alarmed by their sight and became sad. Then other Vanaras got frightened and they entered a holy and a pleasant asylum for shelter.

CHAPTER II

HANUMAN

Sugriva was panic-stricken at the sight of Rama and Lakshmana, and cast his anxious look all around. He could not remain at rest in one place and became extremely sad. He began to think with anxious heart and then addressing his counsellors said, "You see, these two young men have certainly been despatched by Vali. They have put on barks just to create our confidence. You see, how on the pretext of wandering they have penetrated into the deep impenetrable forest."

Then the counsellors seeing those two heroes, carrying bows in their hands, hastily retired to the summit of the hill and sat down encircling Sugriva, their chief. Then other Vanaras, by shaking the hill by their movements, ranged from peak to peak and began to break down the flowery trees by their leaps, and thereby scaring away deer, tigers and cats.

Then of the counsellors seated round Sugriva with

the clasped palms, eloquent Hanuman finding Sugriva thus panic-stricken from fear of Vali, said, "O hero ! Don't be afraid. This is Rishyamuka mountain. Here there is nothing to fear from Vali. I do not see that cruel Vali of terrible look, in whose fear you have come away running with an anxious heart. That wicked person has not come to this forest, so I cannot understand why you are so very afraid."

"O Monkey-chief ! By this, you simply betray your apish nature. Through your light-heartedness you cannot retain calmness of mind. You are endowed with intelligence, do everything by means of gesture. A foolish king cannot rule over the people "

Hearing these reasonable words of Hanuman, Sugriva said, "Who is not struck with fear seeing those two heroes with mighty arms and large eyes, like two heavenly youths equipped with bows and arrows ? Methinks they have been sent by Vali. You see, a king has many friends and they have come here out of that friendship. So we should not readily place our confidence in them. An enemy sometimes acts in an extremely treacherous manner, and by creating confidence he destroys his adversary in an opportune moment. So we must first know their motives. Vali is quite an adept in these things : besides, kings are skilled in deceiving and destroying their enemies. We should therefore, send spies in disguise to ascertain their whereabouts. Hanuman, you go in an humble guise and ascertain by gestures and speech who they are. If you find them cheerful, then greet them on my

behalf and create their confidence by my repeated praise and if from their looks and words you do not find any dark design in them, then ask why have they come to this forest."

Being thus commanded by Sugriva, Hanuman went to Rama and Lakshmana from the Rishyamuka mountain. By discarding the form of a Vanara, he cunningly assumed the guise of a mendicant, and after approaching them with great humility, he began with a profuse eulogy, "O heroes ! Please tell me who you are. You are highly beautiful to look at and are saints devoted to religious practices ; nay, you look like gods. Please tell me why you have come here. You are clad in barks like hermits, but the effulgence of your body shines upon the crystal waters of Pampa. Your locks are matted and your eyes are like the lotus petals. You have frightened the denizens of the forest by reconnoitring the woods on the bank of the Pampa. You carry in your hands bows, like that of Indra, which presages death to your enemies. You are staring like lions and breathing heavily from exhaustion. You are quite heroic and beautiful. The hill has been illumined by your beauty ! You are worthy of sitting on the throne ; tell me then why you are roaming in the forest. One of you resembles the other. It seems that you have descended from the heavenly region, as if the sun and the moon have come down upon the earth ! You have broad chests and your shoulders are like that of a lion. You look like two mighty bulls, beaming with the exuberance of health. You are gods in human

form. Your arms are long and round like the trunk of an elephant. Ornaments should adorn such arms, but I don't know why you have not put them on. It seems you can protect the earth with its hills, dales, forests and seas. Your bows, being bright and gilded with gold, look like golden thunderbolts. Those beautiful quivers are full of deadly arrows like venomous snakes. Those two long swords, wrought in gold, look like two snakes that have cast off their sloughs. But, O heroes ! Why do you not talk to me ?

"You see, in this Rishyamuka hill there lives a hero named Sugriva. He is virtuous and is chief of the Vanaras. He has been roaming throughout the world with a sad heart, being driven off from his kingdom by Vali. I have been sent by him. I am the son of Pavana,¹ a Vanara by nationality, and my name is Hanuman. Pious Sugriva is willing to make you friends. I am his counsellor, I can go wherever I wish, nothing can obstruct my career. It is for Sugriva's benefit that I have come from the Rishyamuka in the guise of a mendicant."

Saying these eloquent words, Hanuman lapsed into silence. Rama was exceedingly delighted at Hanuman's speech, and addressing his brother, Lakshmana, by his side said, "My boy ! I was looking for Sugriva—the monkey-chief. His counsellor is now present before me ! This Vanara here is an orator, you just speak to him in friendly accents. Nobody can talk like this, as he has just now spoken, unless he is versed in the Rik, Yajur and the Sama Vedas. He must have heard the

1 Wind God.

whole of the Grammar many a time, for though he has talked much, not a single slang has escaped from his lips and there was no distortion of his face, brows or eyes while he spoke. His words are sweet and simple. How clear, distinct and sweet voice issues from his throat, chest and roof of the palate. He knows what words should be employed first and what last, that enables one to understand the import of each word and to clearly realise the object indicated by them. It is a wonderful speech ; it can please even one's enemy, ready to strike with an upraised sword. I know not how a king whose emissary is like this achieves his ends. In fact, whose messenger is such a qualified and eloquent speaker, his works are accomplished even by words."

Then eloquent Lakshmana said to Hanuman, Sugriva's counsellor, "O learned one ! We are aware of the noble qualities of Sugriva, and it is why we are looking for him. We shall act according to his directions as you say."

Hearing this clever speech of Lakshmana, Hanuman thinking of Sugriva's victory, became anxious for contracting friendship between Rama and Sugriva.

CHAPTER III

THE INTRODUCTION

Hanuman, hearing the object of Rama's arrival and seeing his peaceful attitude towards Sugriva, thought ; "Since Rama has come for some business which is in the hand of Sugriva, surely he will get back his kingdom."

He then cheerfully asked Rama, "O hero ! Why

have you come with brother Lakshmana to this forest, full of wild and ferocious animals ?

Thereupon, Lakshmana, with the permission of Rama, said, "O hero ! There was a virtuous king by the name of Dasaratha. He protected the four castes according to law. He was envious of none, and nobody ever wished him any evil. That king used to rule over the world like a second Brahma, and performed many sacrifices as Agnistoma, etc. Yon is Rama, his eldest son. He is the most accomplished of all the sons. All auspicious royal signs exist in him. He was installed on the throne, but has been deprived of the kingdom, and therefore, he has come to the forest along with me. As in the evening the solar rays follow the glowing sun, so his wife Sita has followed him. I am his younger brother, Lakshmana, and being captivated by his noble qualities I have undertaken to serve him as a servant. He is worthy of enjoying all happiness, and is adorable of all. He is intent upon the well-being of all, but being deprived of all wealth, he is now passing his days in the forest and hath his wife carried by a Rakshasa. We know nothing about that Rakshasa. Diti's son, named Danu, who was turned into a Rakshasa by a curse has told us this much that Sugriva, chief of the Vanaras, is valiant and wise. He must know who has carried off your wife. Saying this, Danu ascended the heaven with an effulgent body.

"Hanuman ! I have told you everything about Rama. Now, myself and Rama seek shelter of Sugriva. Rama has attained great fame by giving away in charity

profuse wealth, and he who was formerly the lord of all, now seeks shelter of Sugriva. One who is virtuous, and by whose favour the people became happy, now craves for Sugriva's favour ! The eldest son of king Dasaratha, who would do honour to all the worthy princes of the world, now seeks for Sugriva's help. When he being smitten with sorrow has asked for Sugriva's shelter, Sugriva, with the leaders of his party, ought to receive him with grace."

After Lakshmana said this with tearful eyes, the eloquent Hanuman replied, "You are intelligent, gentle and have your senses under control. Sugriva will certainly receive you. It is due to his good luck that you have come here. He has great enmity with Vali. Vali has taken away his wife and has turned him out of the kingdom. Since then Sugriva is passing his days in great fear in the forest. He will now assist you in your search for Sita with his Vanara followers."

Hanuman again said with sweet words, "Come then, let us now go to Sugriva."

Then Lakshmana after greeting Hanuman duly, said to Rama, "Arya ! From what has been said by Hanuman, the son of Pavana, it appears that some object of Sugriva will be achieved through your help. It has therefore, been good that you have come here. This hero has gladly said everything quite frankly, and it does not seem at all likely that he is telling lies."

After this clever Hanuman thought of taking Rama and Lakshmana to Sugriva, and then throwing off his false guise of a mendicant, he assumed the form of a Vanara and left the place by taking Rama and Lakshmana on his back.¹

1 Most of the hill tribes carry burdens on their backs. A hillman easily carries one on his back, seated on a chair, secured by a rope bandage with his head.

CHAPTER IV

FRIENDSHIP

Then Hanuman leaving the Rishyamuka range, arrived at the Malaya hill, and addressing Sugriva, the monkey chief, said, "Here is heroic Rama who has come with his brother Lakshmana. He is the son of king Dasaratha of the Ikshwaku line. He has come to the forest to redeem the pledge of his father. It is for the satisfaction of a queen of that king, who propitiated fire by Rajasuya and Aswamedha sacrifices, who gave hundreds of kine in charity to the Brahmanas, and who ruled over the earth strictly according to the standard of truth and honesty. that Rama has come to the forest. In the mean time, Ravana has carried off his wife. He now seeks your help. Rama and Lakshmana are anxious to make friendship with you. They are highly adorable, now receive them with due honour."

Then, Sugriva hearing these words of Hanuman assumed a cheerful look and spoke with delight, "Rama, I have heard of your noble qualities from Hanuman. You are pious, devoted to penance and bear great affection towards all. I am a Vanara and you are ready to make me your friend. I feel myself highly honoured and benefited by this. Now, if friendship with me be agreeable to you, here I do stretch forth my hand, just grasp it with a firm vow."

Rama then accepted Sugriva's hand in delight, in token of friendship, and embraced him warmly. At that time, Hanuman produced a fire by rubbing two

pieces of wood and worshipping it with flowers, cheerfully placed it between the two.

Then they went round the blazing fire and fondly gazed at each other, but none of them felt satiated by gazing at the other.

Then, Sugriva cheerfully said, "Rama, you are now a dear and a near friend of mine. Our sorrows and joys must now be common."

Saying this, Sugriva broke down a leafy and a flowery branch of the *Sala tree* and sat upon it along with Rama. Hanuman, too, with great delight, brought a blossoming Sandal branch for Lakshmana's seat.

Sugriva then began to narrate with a cheerful look : "Being deprived of kingdom, I have been roaming in the forest with a panic-stricken heart. I have great enmity with Vali. He has taken away my wife. I have taken shelter in this fortress from fear. Please do that by which I can get rid of that fear."

Then the virtuous Rama smilingly replied, "O chief of the monkeys, I know that the outcome of amity is good offices. I shall surely kill Vali, the abductor of your wife. These irresistible sharp shafts of mine, adorned with the feathers of Kanaka, will fall upon him like deadly snakes. You will surely find him slain and shattered like a hill."

Hearing these well-meaning words from Rama, Sugriva joyfully said, "O chief of men ! I shall get back both my kingdom and wife through your grace. You will reduce my enemy, Vali, to such a state that he may not injure me any more."

Thus friendship between Sugriva and Rama was contracted. At that time the left eye of Janaki, like the petal of a lotus, the brownish eye of Vali, and the flaming left eyes of the Rakshasas began to throb.

CHAPTER V

THE REMEMBRANCERS

Sugriva, again, cheerfully resumed, "Hanuman, the chief of my counselors and devoted followers, has told me why you have come to the forest with Lakshmana and how Ravana has carried off Janaki when you and Lakshmana had left her alone, and how that seeker of weak moments killed Jatayu. The Rakshasa has caused you grief of separation from your wife, that sorrow will soon be over. I shall bring back your Sita, like Devasruti carried off by the Danavas. Whether she be in the sky or in the nether region, I will soon restore her to you. Take my words as true, even gods like Indra and the Asuras would not be able to retain Sita, like poisonous food. O hero! Banish your sorrow, I will bring back your darling. Now, I find that she was Janaki who had cried out, Alas, Rama! Alas, Lakshmana! when the Rakshasa was carrying her away, and she writhed like a serpent on Ravana's lap. Seeing five of us on the summit of the hill, she threw down her ornaments and scarf to us. We have deposited them inside the cave. Let me fetch them here, just see whether you can recognise them or not."

Rama then said to Sugriva of sweet speech, "O friend, soon bring them here. Why are you delaying?"

Sugriva, thereupon, entered a deep cave, and after bringing from there the scarf and the ornaments, he said, "Just see."

Rama's eyes then grew misty with tears, as the moon becomes clouded with frost. Being wet with tears for Sita, Rama fell on the ground, uttering "Alack, Sita !". He pressed those ornaments again and again on his heart and panted heavily like a pent-up snake. Then addressing Lakshmana by his side, he broke forth in tears. "Look Lakshmana ! At the time of being carried off, Janaki threw down these ornaments and scarf on the ground. Perhaps, she threw them on a grassy turf, or they could not have remained thus unstained as before."

Then Lakshmana said, "O worshipful one ! I do not know her bracelets or ear-rings ; every day I bowed to her feet, so I know her anklets."

Rama then asked Sugriva, "O Friend, tell me whither that dreadful Rakshasa proceeded carrying off my darling Janaki."

"Where does he live who has caused me such a great calamity ? I shall destroy all the Rakshasas for him. He who has kindled my wrath by stealing away Janaki has opened the door of death for him. Who is that person that has abducted my darling from the forest by deceitful means ? Tell me. I will soon send him to destruction."

Then Sugriva said with joined palms, "Rama ! I do not know the secret abode of that sinful Rakshasa but I know some thing about his prowess and vicious pedigree. Banish your sorrow and I shall tell you truly

that I shall do that by which you will get back your Janaki. I shall soon kill Ravana with his host by my valour that will gladden you. Don't be overwhelmed with grief, bear patiently. Such nervousness does not become a man like you. You see, I am also distressed for separation from my wife, but a humble Vanara as I am, I do not lament like you. Rama, you are noble, intelligent and gentle, you can easily find consolation. Just restrain that flowing stream of tears. Patience is a dignified privilege of the wise, do not forsake that.

He who is calm and intelligent, never loses his self-possession in danger, loss of wealth, even in a situation that threatens his life. He who is not wise and is not clever in any thing is overwhelmed with grief and sinks down like a heavily loaded boat by the current of the river. My friend ! I entreat you with joined hands and for the love that bear to you, resort to your valour, give up your sorrow. Those who are afflicted with sorrow are unhappy, and they lose their manliness. Sorrow may bring about one's end. So do not indulge in grief. It is not advice, but, as a friend I tell you what is good for you. Maintain the honour of amity by banishing your sorrow.

Thus being consoled by the sweet words of Sugriva, Rama wiped his face stained with tears, with the end of his cloth. And after recovering himself, Rama embracing Sugriva, said, "You have done what a well-wishing friend should do. I have grown calm at your words. It is always difficult to get such a friend in times of difficulty and distress. Now, you will have to accomplish

two things, to search for Janaki and to kill that Rakshasa. You will have to put your utmost endeavours in these two things. Now, tell me frankly what shall I do for you. As seeds in a fertile soil become fruitful during the rains, so all your actions will be crowned with success. 'What I have just told you with a spice of pride, know it to be true. I have never told any lie, nor will I ever do it in future.'

Thereupon, Sugriva, with his followers, became extremely delighted at this promise of Rama. Then, Rama and Sugriva taking their seats in a secluded spot talked about their sorrows and joys. Being assured by Rama, Sugriva banished all his doubts about his success.

CHAPTER VI

FRIENDLY DISCOURSE

Being extremely pleased with Rama's words, Sugriva said, "When I have got such an accomplished person as you as my friend, I do no more doubt that I shall be favoured by the gods. Not to speak of my kingdom, by your help I can secure even the kingdom of heaven. Having contracted friendship in the presence of sacred fire, I have risen in the esteem of my own people. You will also, by degrees, realise that I am a worthy friend of yours, but for this I need not advertise about my own qualities now. O independent spirited one ! Affection and regard of a noble person like you always remain constant. True friends say that gold, silver and ornaments are the common properties of all friends. A

friend is a friend, whether he be rich or poor, happy or miserable, good or bad. For friendly love, it is not difficult to forsake one's wealth, happiness or even his native land."

Then, Rama observed to Lakshmana, endowed with the prowess of Indra, "What you have said is not untrue."

On the following day, finding Rama and Lakshmana sad, Sugriva cast restless look all round, and seeing a blossoming branch of the *Sala* he broke it and sat upon it with Rama.

Hanuman also offered a *Sala* branch to Lakshmana.

Ram took his seat and appeared like a calm sea. Then Sugriva said, "My friend! Vali has driven me away. He has stolen my wife; I am roaming about in great distress in the Rishyamuka hill. Vali is my mortal enemy and I am greatly afraid of him. You are the destroyer of all fears, be favourably disposed towards this helpless creature"

Thereupon, virtuous Rama replied with a gentle smile, "My friend, it is by doing good that one becomes a friend and by doing injury that another turns to be an enemy. Now, Vali has become your enemy for his own misdeed, and I shall myself destroy him. You will find him shattered by my sharp arrows adorned with feathers." This filled the martial chieftain Sugriva with delight, and after thanking Rama profusely said, "Rama! You are the refuge of the afflicted and you are also my friend. Therefore, I have expressed my sorrows to you. You have become my friend by accepting my

hand, in the presence of fire, and I vow to you that you are dearer to me than life. Mental agony has made me weak. You are my friend, so I tell you every thing without any reserve."

Saying this, Sugriva burst into tears. He could not then speak out any thing, and with great fortitude restrained his tears that was about to break into torrents. and heaving a deep sigh and wiping off his eyes, he resumed, "My friend ! Vali has turned me out of his kingdom by speaking harsh words. That wicked fellow has stolen my wife, and has cast into prison my friends. He is always anxious to take away my life, and for this he had despatched many Vanaras on several occasions, but I put them to death. To speak you the truth, when you came here I was alarmed at your sight, so I dared not come out. People may be frightened even by a trifle because of fear. Now, only Hanuman and others like him are my friends. These affectionate Vanaras always protect me. They rise and sit at my words. What shall I say more ? Please know this much, my friend, that my present miseries will be over by the destruction of Vali of renowned valour ; my life and happiness simply depend upon his death. Rama ! Being afflicted with sorrow, I have told you even the means of the removal of my sorrows. Whether you be happy or unhappy, you will have to give shelter to me."

Rama asked, "Sugriva ! What is the cause of this hostility with Vali ? I am eager to know it. After hearing that I shall judge of the comparative strength of you two and decide your course of action and shall

do that you may be happy. I have been greatly irritated by hearing the tale of disgrace and it is agitating my heart, like a current of water swollen during the rains. Dost thou now confidently and freely speak so long I fix my string to the bow. As soon as my arrow will be discharged, your enemy will be destroyed."

CHAPTER VII

THE TALE OF ENMITY

Sugriva then began to narrate the cause of enmity. "Rama! Powerful Vali is my elder brother. He was highly esteemed by my father and I too greatly honoured him. After father's death, the counsellors conferred the Vanara Kingdom on Vali, for being the eldest son. When he began to rule over the vast ancestral kingdom, I obeyed him like a slave.

"There was a formidable Asura by the name of Mayavi. He was the son of Dundubhi Danava. Formerly, Vali had incurred his hostility concerning a woman. One night, when all had fallen asleep that Asura appeared at the gate of Kishkindhya and challenged Vali to a fight by emitting terrible roars like that of a lion. Vali was then asleep, but he could not bear those roars and rushed out in great haste. When he rushed forth in great wrath for the destruction of the Asura, I bowed to him and tried to dissuade him, his wives too did the same, but he pushed them aside and sallied forth in wrath. Then, I followed him out of brotherly love."

"Seeing us from a distance, Mayavi began to run

away in fear and, we chased him with great speed. At that time, the moon rose in the sky, and the paths were clearly visible in that light. The Asura then entered a spacious and impregnable cave screened by weeds and grass, and we at once stood barring the mouth of the tunnel. Vali seeing Mayavi had entered the hole, said in wrath, 'Sugriva, stand cautiously at the mouth of this cave, let me enter and kill the enemy in fight.' Hearing this I asked his permission to enter, but after making me swear by his feet to stand at the entrance, he entered the tunnel."

"Thus a year passed. Standing at the entrance of the hole I thought Vali had been killed. On account of my affection for him, I was greatly alarmed and my mind was filled with dark misgivings. After a long time, I found warm blood coming out of that hole. I was startled by that sight. At that time, I heard the noise of the Asuras engaged in a fight; but I heard no voice of Vali. From all those signs, I concluded that Vali was dead and I stopped the mouth of the hole, and after performing the Tarpan rites to his spirit, came back to Kiskindhya with a sorrow-laden heart. My friend! With great care I kept secret all these about Vali, but afterwards the counsellors somehow came to know of these and made me king.

"When I was thus ruling over the kingdom according to law, Vali returned after slaying his enemy, and seeing me installed on the throne, he used very hard expressions towards me, addressing his counsellors to speak the truth. At that time, I could have chastised

him sufficiently, but thinking of the dignity of brotherly relation I restrained myself. When Vali entered the palace after the destruction of his enemy, I greeted him with due honour, but he did not bless me with a cheerful countenance. I bowed down placing my crown at his feet, but great rage prevented him from showing me any favour.

"Then, for my welfare, I humbly said, 'O king ! By good luck, you have returned safe after destroying your enemy. I am helpless, you are my lord. I am holding your umbrella of many ribs, like the full-moon just risen, and your *Chowri* ; please accept my service. For about a year I stood with a distressed heart at the entrance of the tunnel, then I found blood oozing out of the hole through its mouth. I became greatly anxious at this and was overwhelmed with grief, Then, I stopped the mouth of the hole with a stone and returned to Kiskindhya with a sad heart. Then the citizens and the counsellors installed me on the throne even against my will. Forgive me for this. You are the worshipful king, and I shall be your obedient servant as before. Your absence is the cause of my installation. Now, this city with its inhabitants and ministers is safe. Your kingdom was entrusted in my hands as a trust and I protected it as such. O hero ! I bow down to you, and implore you with joined palms to forbear thy wrath. 'A kingdom without a king incites lust of conquest in others, and it is from this apprehension that the citizens and the counsellors, being of one mind, forcibly installed me on the throne.'

"Rama ! When I was humbly submitting these things, Vali abused me greatly and after assembling the citizens and his favourite counsellors said in their presence, 'Citizens and my ministers ! You know that, one night an Asura, named Mayavi, angrily challenged me to a fight. At this I came out of the palace, and this cruel brother of mine also followed me then. That Mayavi seeing us coming out, fled away in fear and we ran after him. He then entered into a dreadful hole. Thereupon, addressing this cruel fellow, I said that I could not return to the city before killing the enemy, and asked him to wait at the mouth of the hole till I returned after accomplishing the task. I entered the cave thinking that Sugriva would remain stationed at the entrance. About a year elapsed in search of Mayavi; after that, I got sight of him and sent him with his comrades to the abode of death. The Asura then groaned in agony and his blood filled the cave. When I came out after slaying that Asura, I could not find any way out of the cave. Then I repeatedly called aloud, 'Sugriva, Sugriva,' but no Sugriva answered. I was extremely distressed at this, and then began to kick at the door again and again till at last the stone fell down from its mouth. Then issuing from the hole I came to the city. But you see how Sugriva forgetting all brotherly love tried to secure my kingdom. This cruel fellow shut me in that cave.' " Saying this, shameless Vali turned me out with a single piece of cloth on me. He drove me away after taking my wife. I roamed over the world in his fear, and being extremely afflicted

with the loss of my wife, I have taken shelter in this Rishyamuka hill. For some special reasons Vali cannot come here. My friend ! I have now told you every thing about the cause of our enmity. I am innocent and I have to suffer all these for nothing. I am thus being greatly tormented by my fear of Vali. O, destroyer of all fears ! Show me thy favour by destroying the cause of my fear."

Then, the heroic Rama replied with a smile, "My friend ! All these irresistible shafts of mine will be showered upon the wicked Vali. So long I do not see the wicked abductor of your wife, he lives. From my own experience I can well tell what an ocean of grief thou hast been plunged into. I shall come to your rescue. You will soon get back your kingdom and wife."

CHAPTER VIII

PROWESS OF VALI

Sugriva hearing these cheering words of Rama with a good deal of eulogy said, "My friend ! In your anger you can destroy all the world like the sun in the hour of universal dissolution. Your bright shafts can pierce one's heart. I shall now give you an account of the prowess of Vali, please listen to it attentively.

"Wonderful is the might of Vali. Within the early hours of dawn he can travel from the eastern ocean to the western one and from the southern to the northern one. That hero ascending a mountain tosses up its peaks and receives them back like ball,¹ and breaks down big trees to prove his strength."

1 The expression is Kanduka, the sport of tossing up balls and catching them as they descended, was prevalent even among the girls.

"Formerly, there lived an Asura in the form of a buffalo, called Dundubhi, huge as a peak as the Kailash. He possessed the strength of a thousand elephants. One day that huge giant being proud of a boon challenged the billowy Deep into a fight. Then the god of the sea rising from the waves said, O hero ! I won't be able to fight with you. There is a mountain adorned with fountains and caves named Himalaya. He is the father-in law of Sankara and the shelter of all saints. He can afford you satisfaction in fight."

"Then Dundubhi finding the Sea-god thus cowed down with fear, hastily arrived at the Himalayas, and by flinging huge blocks of white granite on the ground began to shout in heroic pride. Then Himalaya, of peaceful appearance and sweet looking, like a mass of white clouds, being seated on one of his peaks, said, "O Virtuous one ! I am not efficient in fight. I am the shelter of people devoted to penance, so it does not behove you to inflict any pain on me."

"Dundubhi replied with red hot eyes, "If you are incapable of fighting with me, or if you have lost all zest for a fight in fear, then tell me who will be able to fight with me ?" Then the good speaker, Himalaya, said, "O hero ! There lives a powerful Vanara-chief named Vali in the beautiful city of Kiskindhya. He is the son of Indra—the king of the gods. He will fight a duel with you as king of the gods fought with Namuchi. If you wish for a fight, go to him. He is a great warrior, and his valour is quite irresistible."

"These words filled Dundubhi with great rage and

he rushed towards Kiskindhya, like a heavy cloud during the rains, assuming the dreadful form of a buffalo tossing his sharp horns.¹ Arriving at the city-gate he began to emit loud roars like the sounds of a drum. He broke down trees and plants, rent the earth with his hoofs and, like a mad elephant, pierced the gate with his horns. At that time, Vali was in the inner court of the palace. Being unable to hear the roars he came out with his wives, like the moon surrounded by the stars. Then the Chief of the Vanaras—the inhabitants of forest—briefly asked, 'Why are you emitting those roars obstructing the city-gate? I know what thou art. Now, run away with your life.' Thereupon, Dundubhi replied with red eyes, "Don't say anything before the ladies. First fight with me, then I shall realise your might. I shall restrain my wrath till the rising of the sun giving you time to enjoy. You are Chief of the Vanaras, satisfy them by your embraces and with gifts of love. Have a last look of beautiful Kiskindhya and install some one like you on the throne after summoning your counsellors. To-morrow, I shall humble your pride. To kill one who is unguarded, or a weakling, or an intoxicated person like you, is to commit the sin of destroying a foetus, hence I restrain myself. Go and enjoy yourself freely with your women."

"Vali was enraged at those words, and after dismissing Tara and his other wives, said with a laugh, "If you are not afraid of fighting, don't think me drunk but consider

1. After all it seems nothing but a wild buffalo—described as a demon—but to kill it, it requires Herculean strength.

me drunk with the delight of battle." Saying this, Vali, wearing the golden necklace conferred by your father, took the formidable Asura by the horns and hurled him down on the ground by emitting a heroic roar. Dundubhi began to bleed through the ears. But both were determined to win. Vali, powerful as Indra, began to strike Dundubhi with his fists, kicks, stones and logs of wood. Dundubhi too struck in his turn but grew exhausted by degrees.

"Vali then raised him up and threw him on the ground. Dundubhi began to bleed profusely through the nose and the ears, and, at last, he breathed his last.

"Then Vali hurled that dead Asura about a league off. At that time, drops of blood from Dundubhi's mouth fell on the hermitage of Matanga Rishi. At this the great saint grew highly angry and enquired in his mind who was that wicked fool that had contaminated him with stains of blood. While he was thinking thus, he found a huge dead buffalo at a distance. By the power of Yoga he understood it to be the doing of a Vanara and cursed the act saying, 'That Vanara who has committed this act won't be able to enter my hermitage. He will die instantly if he comes here. If he who has stained my hermitage with blood and broken down the trees and plants by throwing this body of the demon comes within a Yojana of this hermitage will instantly die. Let his followers now leave this place and go wherever they like, or I shall curse them in the same manner. I bear fatherly love towards this forest, and the Vanaras destroy its leaves, roots,

blossoms and buds. I pardon them this day, but if I find any one of them to-morrow, he will be turned into stone on account of my curse and will long remain in that state. "Hearing these words of the sage Matanga, the Vanaras left the place and went to Vali. Seeing them, Vali enquired after the welfare of the Vanaras of the Matanga forest.

"Then they narrated to Vali all about Matanga's curse. Thereupon, Vali immediately proceeded to the asylum of Matanga and begged to be forgiven, but the wrath of the sage was not to be appeased, since then Vali is living in fear and does not venture to come to the Rishyamuka mountain. Knowing that Vali has no access here, I am living with friends in this forest. Look, there lies the huge skeleton of the proud Dundubhi. Look, at these seven palms adorned with leaves and branches. They can at one time be divested of their leaves by the prowess of Vali. I have given you an account of his extraordinary prowess. Now, tell me how will you be able to kill him in a fight?" Thereupon Lakshmana asked with a smile, "Sugriva ! What will induce you to believe in the defeat of Vali ?"

Sugriva replied, "Formerly, Vali many a time pierced these seven palms, if Rama can pierce one of them with an arrow, if he can throw off the skeleton of this buffalo two hundred bows off, I shall consider Vali as dead."

Sugriva again said, "Vali, heroic and proud of his might, his valour known to all, is quite irresistible. Thinking all this I have taken shelter with Hanuman

and others in this Rishyamuka hill out of fear. Rama ! You are deeply devoted to your friends and having got thee I think I have got shelter in the Himalayas, but to tell you the truth, fear of Vali is uppermost in my mind. I don't know your might in battle. However, I do not belittle you in his comparison, nor do I frighten you, but I have been really frightened. My friend ! Your heroic form and courage bespeaks your valour like fire hidden under ashes."

Then Rama smilingly replied, "Sugriva ! If you have no confidence in our valour, then I shall give you convincing proofs."

Saying this, Rama at ease pushed the skeleton of Dundubhi with the toe to ten Yojanas. Thereupon, Sugriva said to Rama, effulgent like the sun, "Rama ! At that time Vali was drunk and exhausted and the corps of Dundubhi was still fresh, but now the skeleton is dry, devoid of flesh, hence light. However, now pierce a palm tree with your arrow, then I shall be able to judge the prowess of the two."

"Just discharge your arrow by bending the bow, like unto the trunk of an elephant ; it will surely pierce through the palm. Rama ! What is the good of any more discussion, do what you think best for me. Like the sun amongst the energising objects, like the Himalayas amongst the mountains, like the lion amongst quadrupeds, you are the foremost in prowess amongst men. "

Then, Rama to acquire Sugriva's confidence, took up his bow and a dreadful shaft and discharged it aim-

ing at the palms, resounding every quarter with the twang of his bow. As soon as that shaft was discharged it pierced through the seven palms, a rock and the innermost region of the earth and in a minute again came back to the quiver !

Sugriva was simply astonished at this heroic feat of the warrior Rama, supremely skilled in the use of arms. He fell prostrate on the ground and profoundly bowed down to him and then with clasped palms, gratefully said, "Rama ! What to speak of Vali, you can destroy in battle with your arrows even the gods with Indra and others at their head. Who can resist him in battle who can pierce through with a single shaft seven palms, a rock and the nether region ? I have been more than satisfied. Now I entreat you with joined palms to kill for my benefit Vali, my enemy in the form of a brother."

Rama then embracing the good-looking Sugriva, in sweet language, said, "My friend ! Let us start direct from the Rishyamuka to Kiskindhya. You go ahead and challenge in a fight Vali, your false brother."

CHAPTER IX

THE CHALLENGE

After this, they all arrived at Kishkindhya and concealed themselves behind the screen of trees by entering a dense forest.

Sugriva then tied his cloth round his waist and summoned Vali with a terrible roar that seemed to rend the sky.

At this, the heroic Vali was greatly enraged and as the sun travels from the eastern mountain whence it emerges to the western hill where it sets, so Vali came out in a hurry. A great duel was fought between the two, as between the Mercury and the Mars in the sky. Being overwhelmed with rage, they began to strike each other with their fists and palms. At that time, Rama stood hid behind a tree, holding a bow in his hand. Rama found one quite indistinguishable from the other, like the twin Aswini Kumara brothers, so he refrained from discharging his deadly shaft.

In the meantime Sugriva was defeated by Vali, and he fled in fear of his life towards the Rishyamuka, finding Rama not coming to his rescue. Vali pursued him in great anger. Being beaten and exhausted, Sugriva entered a deep forest with a bleeding body. Seeing that Vali gave up the chase in fear of curse, saying, "Go, thou art saved."

After that, Rama with Lakshmana and Hanuman arrived at the place where Sugriva was. Seeing Rama, Sugriva, with a downcast look and struck with shame, pathetically said, "Rama! You first gave me proofs of your valour, and asked me to challenge Vali to a fight, then you suffered me to be beaten by my enemy! I can't understand your conduct. You should have told me plainly that you would not leave this place, nor would kill Vali."

Rama then consoling Sugriva said, "My friend! please don't be angry. Hear me why I did not shoot my arrow. Both you and Vali looked quite alike by

your statures and dress. At that time, I could not detect any difference between the two, either in voice, movement, dress, colour, look, or in prowess. I stood dumbfounded in confusion and was alarmed by that resemblance. So I could not discharge my deadly shaft, fearing that I might strike you down and thus end our friendship. People would have condemned me if, as a fool, I would have destroyed you through my ignorance or childishness.

"Moreover, it is a great sin to kill one who has asked for shelter. My friend ! What shall I say more ? Myself, Lakshmana and Sita shall always be at your service, and I live under you: shelter. You are our only stay in this forest. Go now, and again fight a duel without any fear. You will immediately perceive Vali rolling on the dust struck by my arrow. Now before you enter into the arena of battle put on some mark so that I may recognise you. Lakshmana ! Pluck that sweet-scented and auspicious, blossoming Naga creeper and put it round Sugriva's neck." Thereupon, Lakshmana brought a blossoming Naga creeper from the foot of the hill and tied it round the neck of Sugriva. Then, with that flowery creeper round his neck, Sugriva looked as beautiful as a cloud tinged with the evening rays of the sun, with flocks of cranes hovering under it ! Being thus encouraged by Rama, Sugriva became desirous of starting for Kishkindhya again.

CHAPTER X

ENCOURAGEMENT

Then, Rama, with Lakshmana, taking sharp and gilded arrows proceeded towards Kishkindhya ruled by the prowess of Vali. First of all, walked Sugriva with the creeper tied round his neck. After him went Lakshmana, heroic Hanuman, Nala and powerful Vanaras. On their journey, they saw many beautiful caves, forests and peaks. They saw lotuses in clear pools, bloomed like the buds of Vaidurya gem and heard the joyous cries of swans, Chakravakas and other aquatic birds.

As they proceeded, they found trees bent down with heavy profusion of flowers, lucid streams running to the sea, tall cliffs, deep caves, flocks of deer running fearlessly in the forest. They saw terrible, wild elephants with white tusks ranging along—the destroyers of river-bank, and raiders of pools. They met monkeys huge as elephants and covered with dust. Seeing all these, the followers of Sugriva advanced on their way.

Coming across a dense forest, Rama asked Sugriva, "Look there a deep forest, dark as a patch of clouds under the sky ! Its skirts are surrounded by plantain groves. Tell me, my friend, what forest is this ? Great is my curiosity to know."

Then, Sugriva, while proceeding, replied, "It is an extensive asylum, it removes all languor, and abounds in palatable fruits and roots. Here lived seven Rishis called Sapta Janas. They always lived in water with their heads hanging down, and fed upon air after seven days. These saints after seven hundred years repaired

bodily to the heavenly region. By virtue of their penance, this asylum is inaccessible to the god and the Asuras. Even beasts and birds do not enter here. Those who enter there through ignorance meet with death. Here, the jingling sounds of the ornaments of the nymphs and their sweet notes are constantly heard, and one can always smell sweet odour. Here always burn three kinds of fire, like Garhapatya. Look, there rises its pink flame like the wings of a pigeon, and the tops of the trees lit up by the flame appear like Vaidurya hills. Rama ! Bow down to these saints reverentially with Lakshmana. Those who show them honour become free from all fears of disease."

Then, Rama with Lakshmana bowed to the saints with clasped palms, and Sugriva with the Vanaras delightfully proceeded, and they, at last, arrived at impregnable Kishkindhya, protected by Vali.

After arriving at Kishkindhya, they stationed themselves behind a screen of trees and the stout-necked Sugriva, fond of woods, being surrounded by the Vanaras, angrily challenged Vali to a fight, tearing the sky with a terrible yell. It seemed, as if, a cloud, steered by the wind, was thundering at that time.

Then Sugriva, of red hue like the rising sun, with the slow gait of a proud lion, looking at Rama said, "Rama ! We have now arrived at Kishkindhya, the city of Vali. It is full of golden instruments and Vanaras and is decorated with flags. You have promised to bring about the destruction of Vali. Now redeem that

pledge, as the present season fills the creepers with fruits, so fructify that promise."

Thereupon, Rama said, "For putting that flowery Naga creeper round your neck, you look beautiful like the moon encircled by the sky. Now, point out to me your enemy in the guise of your brother. I shall remove your fear and enmity with a single shaft. He will roll in the dust as soon as he comes within my sight. If Vali, coming within my view escapes with his life, accuse me then. I have penetrated seven palms in your presence, so consider Vali as slain by me. I never speak any falsehood even at the risk of my life, nor shall I do it in future for any gain. So banish your fear. I tell you, I will redeem my pledge. As Indra fructify the seedlings with rain, so I shall fulfil my promise. Now, set up such a roar so that Vali, adorned with gold necklace, may come out. Vali is proud and fond of fighting. If you challenge him, he will certainly come out of his inner apartments, leaving the company of his wives. A hero can never brook any insult by his enemy. Specially when he know himself to be truly gallant, he won't stand before his wife."

Then Sugriva, of golden yellow hue, set up a terrible roar which seemed to rend the sky. Thereupon, the bovine cattle became frightened and pale, like damsels contaminated by the touch of third persons for the fault of the king.¹ The deer ran away in fright.

1 i.e., for want of proper protection.

CHAPTER XI

TARA'S COUNSEL

The impatient Vali, of golden hue, heard the terrific roar of his brother from the inner apartment. As soon as he heard it, he began to tremble in age. He felt himself humiliated, and grew dim like the sun in the eclipse. His eyes flamed, in anger like glowing cinders. He looked terrible for his teeth, and appeared dreary like a pond whence lotuses have vanished, but where remain only the bare stalks. He came out tearing the earth by his heroic treads.

At that time, Tara embracing him out of love, said with great mortification and fear, "O hero, as people in the morning rising from bed discard their garlands worn at night, so give up your anger which is carrying you away like the impetuous current of a river. Tomorrow fight with Sugriva. Though your enemy is not more powerful than you, though you are not in any way insignificant, yet I forbid you not to go out so suddenly. Listen to me why I prevent you now. Formerly when Sugriva challenged you to a fight, you went out and defeated him and he fled away, being wounded by you.

"It has caused great apprehension in me to think that he, who once had run away being defeated and beaten by you, would again venture to challenge you in a fight. The pride and energy with which he has set up his terrible roars, indicate that there is some deep mystery behind it. Perhaps, Sugriva has not come without some succour. Probably, he has taken

somebody's protection, and it is for his prowess that Sugriva has set up such a terrible roar. Sugriva is intelligent and clever, so he will never contract friendship with him whose valour he has not tested.

"O, hero ! I shall tell you to-day what I once heard from prince Angada. He had heard all these from his emissaries and then has related to me.

"Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, has come to the forest with Lakshmana. They are born of the Ikshwaku family. They are unconquerable and heroic, and have come to the Rishyamuka mountain for Sugriva's well-being. I have heard that mighty Rama will help your brother in battle. He is like the doomsday-fire. Rama is the shelter of the righteous and of the distressed. Fame follows his foot-steps. He is wise, prudent and obedient to his father. As the Himalayas are the home of all minerals, so he is the abode of all virtues. He has no equal on earth, so it is not proper for you to incur his hostility.

"O hero ! I do not wish to kindle your wrath, but I have something more to submit, please hear me. Do thou immediately declare Sugriva as heir-apparent to the throne. He is your younger brother, it is your duty to maintain him. Whether he remains near or at a distance, he is no doubt your friend and I do not find another friend of yours like him in the world. By banishing your inimical feelings, win him over with gifts and proper honour. Enmity with him is not good for you. Let him stand by your side. Nothing is good to you but brotherly love, my lord ! If you

regard me as your well-wisher, then consider what I am saying to be for your benefit. Be pleased and abide by my words. Rama is powerful like Indra, do not quarrel with him."

But Vali's end was near, so he did not listen to the well-meaning words of Tara.

CHAPTER XII

THE FALL OF VALI

Then Vali reprimanding Tara, of moon-like countenance, said, "Ah, my timid creature ! Why should I put up with his anger since my brother, who is my enemy, is roaring so haughtily ? Brave people, who do not run away from the battle-field and who have never experienced any defeat, prefer death to ignominy. Now Sugriva is challenging me to a fight, how can I brook his boast ?"

"Ah, my darling ! Don't be anxious for me from fear of Rama. He is virtuous and full of gratitude. Why should he be inclined to commit evil ? Go back with your maids. Why do you follow me here ? I have got sufficient proof of your devotion towards me. Don't be afraid on my account, I shall fight with Sugriva. I shall not kill him but shall humble his pride. I shall not override your wishes. He will be dealt with mercifully. He will run away even being struck with fists and sticks. That vicious one will never be able to withstand my prowess and skill in battle. My darling ! You have given me good counsel and evinced great love for me.

For my sake, please go back with your women. I assure you that I shall inflict only defeat on Sugriva."

Then, Tara of sweet speech embraced Vali and began to shed gentle tears. She prayed and recited mantras for the victory of Vali and re-entered the inner apartment with her maids, oppressed with grief. After this, Vali panting heavily like a serpent with anger, hurriedly came out of the palace and cast his look all around to get a sight of Sugriva. He saw golden-yellow Sugriva, standing like a column of fire by tying up his loins with a piece of cloth. Then mighty armed, heroic Vali tied his clothes firmly and rushed forward with clinched fists. Sugriva too in anger raised his fists and with red-hot-eyes rushed towards Vali.

Thereupon, Vali said, "Look here ! I have clinched my fist and knitted my knuckles closely, I will kill thee with this blow."

Sugriva too answered in wrath, "I will crush your head by this fist-blow and immediately despatch you to the realm of death."

Thereupon, Vali attacked Sugriva and began to strike him vehemently. Then blood began to flow all over Sugriva's body like rills and fountains trickling down a hill. But Sugriva fearlessly uprooted a Sala tree and hurled it like a thunder on Vali. Vali, being smitten by that blow, became overwhelmed like a loaded boat in the sea. Both were equally strong, skilful and quick to take advantage of another's mistake. They shone like the sun and the moon in the sky, and began to strike each other vigorously with their fists,

arms, legs and nails. Both were wounded and both began to bleed. Both tore the sky with their angry yells. But after a short lapse of time, Vali regained his strength, and Sugriva became exhausted and was worsted in the fight. Sugriva became extremely angry, and indicated by signs and gestures his loss of strength to Rama.

Rama finding Sugriva thus over-powered and repeatedly casting anxious looks all around, took up a dreadful shaft for the destruction of Vali. He then fixed it on the bow-string, like the wheel of destruction. Beasts and birds were frightened by the twang of his bow and fled away in different directions in fear of destruction. That flaming shaft, like a flaming thunderbolt, with a terrific din, smote Vali on the breast. The heroic Vali thus being struck by Rama fell prostrate like the flag-staff of Indra raised at the time of the full-moon in the month of Aswina. His voice was choked and he became senseless.

As the great god, Rudra, emits fire with smoke from the third eye of his forehead, so Death-like Rama, foremost of men, discharged that foe-destroying flaming arrow, worked with silver and gold. Being struck by that arrow and being bathed in blood, Vali fell like a blossoming Asoka tree grown on the hill.

CHAPTER XIII

GRAVE ACCUSATION

Then Vāli, adorned in gold, measured his full length on the ground like a cut-down tree, and Kishkindhya

grew dark like the moonless sky. Still then the jewelled necklace given by Indra shone round his neck, for which, his radiance, life and strength did not seem to forsake him altogether. For that gold necklace, he looked like an evening cloud, whose fringes had been tinged with crimson light. His beauty appeared to have been divided between the necklace, and his body, with the shaft struck to his heart. Being struck by Rama's arrow, he attained heavenly bliss. At that time, he looked like a flame about to be extinguished or like king Yayati fallen from heaven, on account of the waning of his religious merit ; or as if Time had brought down the sun on the ground on the day of universal dissolution. Vali was irresistible as Indra, had broad chest, long arms reaching up to the knees, bright countenance and yellow eyes. Rama with Lakshmana gazed at him and with great respect drew near him with gentle steps.

Thereupon, Vali spoke to warlike Rama bold and hard words, but just and appropriate. He said, "Rama, I was engaged in a fight with another man, for what did you then strike me down ? You are born of a noble family, you are heroic, mighty and compassionate, you are firm in your resolutions, you are energetic and are always engaged in the welfare of people, you have proper ideas of time and place, and all people speak highly of you ; moreover, knowing that control of passions, heroism, forgiveness, patience, righteousness, chastisement of the guilty, all these kingly virtues, exist in you, and thinking of your high pedigree, I

came to fight without paying any heed to Tara's warning. So long I did not behold you, I thought that since I was engaged in fight with another person, and consequently off my guard, Rama would not strike me. But now I find you to be wicked, unrighteous while passing under the guise of righteousness. You are like a well, hid in the grass, and fire under ashes. You are a wicked villain though passing for an honest man. I did not know you to be a hypocrite feigning piety, and addicted to vicious deeds. I have not slighted you in any way, nor have I done any wrong to your city or to your province. I am an innocent denizen of the forest—a Vanara—living on fruits and roots. Nor was I engaged in a fight with you, why did you strike me then? You are a famous man and a prince, you are of pleasing appearance, and outwardly look to be virtuous! Tell me, now, who being born of a Kshatriya family having education and discretion and possessing all the outward semblance of a virtuous man, can act so dastardly without any hesitation or remorse.¹

1 This event conclusively proves that Rama was not an out and out creation of Valmiki's imagination. Valmiki would have by all means avoided (had it solely depended on his imagination) such a stain on Rama's lily-white character. The event had some historical background behind it, and Valmiki, in spite of his deep love of ideals could not be false to history, nor could he omit inconvenient facts, as some modern writers of history do, because of their pet theories or narrow patriotic zeal. This conclusively proves that Rama is not a myth, nor is the Ramayana an allegorical poem.

This act of Rama may, however, be justified from a poetical point of view. Rama who had recently lost Sita,

"Tell me why you are wandering about in the form of a mendicant. A king should have sense of equity and charity, but you have none. I am a Vanara and you are a man. Why did you smite me then? Gold, silver, land and such other tempting things are the incentives to compass another's death, but how could you be tempted by our wild fruits and roots? A king should at any cost and fearlessly enforce laws and discipline and mete out favour and punishment. He should not act according to his whims. But, Rama! You are whimsical, haughty and fickle and too narrow-minded in the discharge of royal duties. You have no respect for righteousness, no regard for what is profitable or good, but you are swayed by your senses and lust. Now tell me how you would defend yourself amongst the virtuous after killing me. Those who encompass the death of the king, Brahmanas and kine, those who commit treachery, those who are thieves, deceitful and atheists, those who kill their friends, those who commit adultery with the wives of their preceptors, those who marry before their elder brothers, all go to hell. I am king of the Vanaras and certainly you have committed a sin by destroying me.

"Rama! My skin, hairs, bones and meat are not of any use to a man like you. Of the clawed animals (possessing five nails) only a rhino, a porcupine, an

became deeply affected when he heard Sugriva's tale of sorrow similar to his own, and he readily promised to help the latter and acted on the impulse of the moment, like a Shakespearean hero, with hot blood and a ready hand.

iguana, a hare and tortoise can be eaten by a Brahmin or a Kshatriya. Though I possess five nails, yet my flesh is not approved by the Shastras, so you have killed me for nothing. Alas! Darling Tara told me what was true and beneficial but I slighted her words through ignorance. The earth, in spite of you, seems to be husbandless just as a gentle damsel appears to be when married to a man who has renounced his faith! You are wicked, treacherous and mean. How could a villian like you be born of Dasaratha? You are characterless and have deviated from the path of virtue. It is a pity that I have been destroyed by a man like you. Defend your conduct in a decent society. I had no concern with you, but you have applied your prowess against me, whereas those who have wronged you remain quite untouched! To speak the truth, you would have met death at my hand today, had you openly fought with me. It was difficult to attack me, but you have attacked me by concealing yourself from my view, as a serpent bites a person when asleep. Surely, you have committed sin by this act. You have compassed my destruction for Sugriva's well-being, but had you told me about the recovery of Janaki I could have restored her in the course of a day. I could have made over to your hand wicked Ravana, the abductor of your wife, by binding his neck with a chain. As Hayagriva stole white Gandharvi Sruti so I would have brought her at your bidding from the bottom of the sea, or from the nether region. It is proper that Sugriva should ascend the throne after my death, but it is highly improper for

you to strike me thus unjustly. Every living being is doomed to death, hence I am not at all sorry for death but tell me what thou hast gained by my death."

Then noble Vali's tongue became dry. He was smarting under pain for wounds all over the body inflicted by the arrow, and staring at Rama, glowing like the sun, Vali lapsed into silence.

CHAPTER XIV

RAMA'S REPLY

Heroic Vali lay like the sun shorn of its lustre, like a cloud devoid of water, and an extinguished flame, Rama being thus reproached, said in modest and upright word, "Vali! Why do you blame me through childishness, being ignorant of duty, love and of popular customs? Without learning anything from the elders and preceptors you have ventured to take me to task.

"This land, with all its hills and forests, belongs to the Ikshwakus, and they are the chastisers of all human beings, of beasts and birds. Now, truthful and straight-forward Bharata himself has assumed the charge of protecting this land. He is modest, versed in

Sruti—The revealed knowledge, of course, the sacred Vedas, here compared to Swetaswatari (white Gandharvi). Now, Aswatari may mean either the wife of the great serpent who was supposed to live in the nether region (i. e., a Nagini) or a female Gandharvi.

I have preferred the latter meaning. Hayagriva, (having the neck of a horse) a Daitya prince, stole the Vedas at the end of a cycle of creation (Kalpa). Vishnu assumed the form of a Fish and rescued the Veda by killing the Daitya king. There is an Upanishad named Swetaswatara.—Translator.

polity, and is skilled in chastising the wicked and in protecting the good. He has appropriate notion of time and place and knows the real significance of religion, desire and wealth. Now, he is the ruler of the earth ; we and other princes tour over the world at his command for the spread of righteousness. When that virtuous king of kings himself rules over the world who will dare violate the order of religion ? You are irreligious, passionate and characterless and you have committed breach of kingly virtues. Father, elder brother, and preceptor should always be treated as one's father, while younger brother, son, and pupil should be regarded as one's son. And this is what is sanctioned by religion. The religion of the saintly people is indeed difficult to understand but the immortal soul that dwells in every body's heart can discern what is good or bad. You are fickle-minded ; your other Vanara companions are also fickle, restless and foolish. As a blind man cannot lead another blind man, so how would you be able to discern right and wrong by consulting your companions. Don't abuse me simply from anger. Now listen to me why I have struck you.

"By violating eternal principles of righteousness, you have ravished your younger brother's wife. Noble Sugriva is still alive, his wife, Ruma, is according to the Shastras your daughter-in-law. You have committed great sin by securing her. You are a libertine, and have violated religion. I have, therefore, punished you. There is no other meet punishment, but death for him who acts against humanity and

violates immemorial customs. I am born of a noble Kshatriya line, how can I overlook your crime? Death-sentence is legally awarded to him who being infatuated with lust, becomes attached to his daughter, born of him, sister or brother's wife. Now Bharata rules over the earth. We are under his service. You have deviated from the path of virtue, how can we then overlook it? Bharata is engaged in governing the world according to the rules of righteousness, and that intelligent ruler punishes him who is sinful and vicious. Bharata is always prompt to strike down lustful people. We have punished you at his tacit wish.

"I have as great a friendship with Sugriva as with Lakshmana. Sugriva promised me his help for the recovery of my kingdom and wife, and I also promised to help him, in the presence of other Vanaras. How one like myself can break his promise? Know, therefore, thou chief of the Vanaras, that for these reasons, I have punished you. It is my duty to chastise you. If you had any regard for righteousness, you would have willingly submitted to punishment. Those who are virtuous, help their friends. Manu has, in two verses, given directions for the purification of character and the virtuous people believe in the efficacy of them, I have also acted according to them. Manu has said that those who are punished by the king for their offences, the sins are expiated by that punishment and they go to heaven like the virtuous people.¹ The guilty are, at least, absolved from sin

1 Manu—Book VII Verse 318.

either by atonement or by punishment, but the king who, instead of punishing the offender sets him free, commits a great sin. O chief of the Kapis ! Formerly a Bauddha¹ Sannyasi committed sins like you, and my worshipful forefather, Mandhata, chastised him. Other kings too in order to rectify him, dealt out due punishments to him. Besides such punishment by the sovereign, there is penance by which all sins are atoned. Therefore, do not lament any more. I have punished according to the sanctions of morality ; we are not free, but governed by religion.

"O hero ! I have something further to add, listen to it, but don't be offended. I am not at all sorry for striking you from concealment. People capture (*Mriga*) deer by means of noose or trap, either openly or by lying in ambush. The deer might be frightened, might be unsuspecting, might be off its guard, or cautious, might be at bay or run-away, but men living on flesh commit not the slightest sin by killing it. Even pious princes hunt in the forest. Now you are a *Shakhamriga*, a monkey. It doesn't matter whether you fought with me or nor. I have struck you since you are a deer.² The king is the defender of his people's faith and his duty is to do him good, hence the lives of his tenants are at his command. A king is a god who visits the earth in the form of a man, so one ought not to

1 This expression proves that this portion is a later interpolation.—Translator.

2 *Mriga* means deer. *Shakhamriga* (an arboreal deer) means monkey. Thus there is a pun upon the word.—Translator.

envy him, abuse him, insult him or utter anything unpleasant towards him ; I have only performed the duties appertaining to my class, but being ignorant of right and wrong, you are unjustly accusing me through your anger."

At this, Vali got true spiritual vision and considered Rama to be absolutely innocent. He then said with folded palms :

"Rama ! Your words are true, and not unreasonable. You are good and I am bad, how shall I reply to your words ? However, you should not take any offence for whatever unpleasant or unjust things I might have uttered against you through ignorance or mistake. You have personal experience of righteousness. You are engaged in the welfare of your subjects, your supreme intelligence is your guide for proving one's guile and punishing him accordingly ; and I am the foremost of all sinners. O, virtuous soul ! Please save me now by pious counsels."

By that time tears choked Vali's throat and his voice became faint. Being nearly dead like an elephant stuck in the mud, he broke forth in a distressed voice looking at Rama. "O Rama ! I am not the least sorry for myself, nor do I think anything about my friends and relations, but I feel distressed with thoughts about Angada, there, adorned with gold bracelet. I have brought him up from his boyhood and in my absence he will grow sad, and will pine away like a dried up pond. Angada is my only son, he is a mere boy, his intelligence has not yet ripened. I love him dearly,

please protect him now. May you ever remain gracious to Sugriva and Angada. Please help them in their good actions and prevent them from doing any wrong. As you look upon Bharata and Lakshmana, so kindly look upon these two. The virtuous Tara is guilty towards Sugriva on my account, but let not Sugriva insult her in any way. He who is obedient to you, and with your help, has recovered his kingdom, is capable of ruling over the earth, even heaven is quite accessible to him. Rama ! What shall I say more ? Though Tara forbade me, but courting death at your hand, I was engaged in a duel with Sugriva."

Saying this Vali lapsed into silence.

Then Rama finding Vali free from all doubts and suspicions, consoled him with pious words, "O Vali ! do not blame us, nor consider yourself guilty. We are more conversant with the principles of religion than you are, so listen attentively to what I say. He who punishes the punishable and he who receives the punishment will not lose their spiritual bliss, for each one has done his part. Now, you have been absolved, from guilt for this punishment and being thus punished, you have won your religious merit. Now banish all your sorrows, fears and mistakes. Angada will be as affectionately brought up by me as by you, and Sugriva will never slight him in any way."

Then Vali hearing these sweet words of Rama—the repressor of enemies in battle—replied with cogent words :

"O hero ! I am smitten with arrows and about to

lose my consciousness, please forgive me, for what I have said through ignorance. Be propitiated."

Vali who had already received injuries all over the body being struck with stones and trees, lay prostrate by the shaft of Rama and became unconscious through excessive pain.

CHAPTER XV

TARA

In the meantime Tara heard that Vali had been slain by Rama's arrows. Hearing that cruel news she became extremely anxious and came out of Kishkindhya taking Angada with her. At that time, the powerful Vanara retinue of Angada were running away in fear at the sight of Rama. Tara met them on the way. As the deer run away in different directions when the lord of their herd is killed, so they were running away, every one being borne down with extreme sorrow and fear, as if Rama's shaft was after each of them.

Thereupon, Tara asked them with a distressed heart, "O Vanaras ! Why are you running away frightened and distressed, leaving behind your king, before whom you always used to march ? I have heard that cruel Sugriva has taken Rama's help for the kingdom, and Rama has killed Vali by striking him violently with an arrow from a distance. Why are you so afraid ? Rama is far off from here."

Then the Vanaras, capable of assuming different forms at will, said in one voice, "O thou with son alive ! Do thou go back. Protect your son, Angada, death

himself assuming the form of Rama has carried away Vali. Rama's arrows have pierced through trees and huge stones. Vali has been struck by that thunderbolt-like shaft. On the extinction of that Indra-like mighty ruler, the Vanara hosts are hurriedly fleeing away in great consternation. Let the heroes now defend Kishkindhya and install Angada on the throne. All will submit if Vali's son be installed as king. But, O queen, we think you should not live here any more. Hanuman and other Vanaras will soon enter the fortress. Both those who have wives and those who have not, will enter here. Formerly, we ill-treated them. They are most covetous and we are very much afraid of this.

Thereupon, Tara gave a fitting reply to their words, "My husband is dead, what shall I do with my son? There is no need for kingdom, nor is there any necessity for self-defence. I shall take my shelter under his feet who has been killed by Rama's arrow."

Saying this, being overwhelmed with grief, Tara ran forward in tears, striking repeatedly her forehead and breast with her palms. Proceeding some distance she saw her husband, the destroyer of enemies and irresistible in battle, who could hurl huge stones and move about freely in the battle-field like the wind, who could emit terrible roars, was lying on the ground, slain by a single hero, as if a lion has been killed by a tiger, rapacious for flesh, as if a cloud was lying idle, by discharging all its content, like unto a sacred pile of stones decorated with flags, and altars revered by people that had been scattered and broken by Garuda,

the king of birds, in quest of snakes. At a little distance, Rama stood reclining his body on a mighty bow, by the side of Lakshmana and Sugriva. Tara passed by them, came near Vali and fainted in grief as soon as she beheld him.

At last, she awoke from her stupor with a cry on her lips, "A worshipful lord." Finding Vali to be dead, she burst into tears.

Then Sugriva beholding Tara weeping and Angada by her side grew extremely sad.

Tara, with a moon-like countenance, seeing her husband, huge as a rock, lying on the ground like a felled down tree slain by the deadly shaft of Rama, burst into bitter lamentations with a sorrow-stricken heart, embracing her dead lord! "O mighty hero! Why dost thou not talk to me? Perhaps, I am guilty of some iniquity? Get up and lie on some better bed. A king like you never sleeps on the ground. Perhaps, you love the earth more than you do love me, since you have embraced it in death leaving me behind. Perhaps being engaged in a just conflict you have built another beautiful city like Kishkindhya in heaven, or how could you renounce your love for this city? You used to sport with us in fragrant woods, now there will be an end to all such things. I have been rendered destitute and desolate by your death. My heart must be very hard, since it has not yet broken seeing you lying on the ground. You drove away Sugriva by taking away his wife, and this is the consequence of that act. You neglected, through your perverse judgment, what I

spoke to you for your well-being about this fight. My lord ! I think you will entice the minds of the heavenly nymphs, clever in speech and proud of their beauty and youth. It is Time that has destroyed you, though you were under the control of none, but it has dragged you by force before Sugriva. You were engaged in fighting with another person and Rama is not the least sorry for striking you so dastardly ! I have never suffered in life, now I shall have to suffer the sorrows of widowhood and live like a helpless woman, a poor object of pity. My heroic Angada was till now happy. I have brought him up with great care, but I know not what treatment he will receive from his angry uncle. Angada ! Have with all your heart, a last look of your virtuous father. You will not see him any more. My lord, when you went to any foreign land, you used to console Angada by kissing his head, and told me all you had then to say. By your death, Rama has achieved a great thing—he has been absolved from his pledge to Sugriva. Sugriva ! Your desire is now fulfilled. Your enemy has been destroyed, you will get back your darling Ruma and rule over the kingdom free from all anxiety.

“Alas ! My lord ! I am crying bitterly, why do you not welcome me ? I am your darling. Your beautiful wives are here, just cast your look once upon them.”

Then the Vanara-women being stricken with sorrow at Tara's lamentations began to cry surrounding Angada on all sides.

Tara broke forth again : “O Lord ! Are you leaving Angada behind for good in your eternal journey to an

unknown land ? Angada is beautiful and well-dressed. In accomplishments, he is like you, don't leave him behind. O hero ! If I have offended you in any way through my carelessness, I entreat you by your feet, please forgive me."

Lamenting thus bitterly Tara with other Vanara women, at a little distance from Vali, resolved to starve themselves to death.

CHAPTER XVI

CONSOLATION

Then Hanuman, the chief of the Vanara hosts, seeing Tara, like a star fallen on the ground from the sky, gently said, "O queen ! All creatures reap the consequences of their acts good or bad. You look poor and distressed with sorrow, but tell me for which worthy object of sorrow you are thus mourning ? You are yourself an object of pity, yet for which poor object of pity are you showing this generosity ? I know not who mourns for one having himself this body, like unto a bubble of water ! O lady, with thy son alive now look after prince Angada and decide what to do after Vali's death. Thou knowest that life and death are most uncertain on earth. One should, therefore, do what is best after the death of one's husband or son, and should not mourn for the loss. He is now dead, under whom hundreds of Vanaras received their shelter. This hero used to discharge his kingly duties according to the sanctions of morality, and was endowed with many kingly virtues, such as charity, forgiveness, and equality of treatment.

Now, he has attained the worthy abode of kings, so do not any more mourn for him. These mighty Vanaras and this Vanara kingdom belong to you. Sugriva and Angada have been greatly affected with grief; just direct them to perform the funeral rites of Vali. Let prince Angada rule over the kingdom under your directions.

"That thing is now arrived for which a person prays for the birth of a son, so wait for nothing else.

"Tara ! Install Angada on the throne, surely you will be happy, seeing him installed on the throne."

Then Tara, overwhelmed with grief for the loss of her husband, sorrowfully replied, "I do not care for hundred sons like Angada. It is my duty to follow my dead husband. What authority have I over the Kapi¹ kingdom or in installing Angada on the throne? Sugriva is Angada's uncle ; all these things now belong to him. Don't think that I shall of my own accord confer the kingdom on Angada. It is the father and not the mother who is the guardian in the case of a son. Nothing else is good for me either in this world or in the next, but to take shelter under the feet of Vali and to lie down by the side of the hero."²

¹ The expression Kapi, literally, means a monkey, but here neither Kapi nor Vanara literally means a monkey. The Vanaras were certainly not apes or monkeys.

The Vanaras, in all probability, appear to be Dravidians who had developed a high order of civilisation, as the ruins of Mahenjo Darro testify. The Aryans, however, had not much liking for them. They seem to have been described as Vanaras from derision by the white Hindus probably for the dark complexion and dwarfish figure. They appear to be as much civilised as the Aryans. Their conduct, words and sentiments all point out to this.

² Apparently it refers to the custom of Suttee.

CHAPTER XVII

LAST WORDS OF VALI

At that time, Vali, being at the point of death, was casting looks all around and heaving faint sighs. Seeing Sugriva standing before him, addressing the victorious hero in clear accents said :

"Sugriva ! I was being daily dragged down by my inevitable, perverse understanding, because I became addicted to sin, so you should not take any offence with me. Perhaps it was not in our luck to enjoy the double bliss of fraternal love and the enjoyment of kingdom or why should such a thing happen at all ? However, take charge of governing these denizens of forest, as I shall immediately leave behind this mortal life, kingdom, splendour and spotless fame. O hero, I have something more to add and you will have to do it, though it may be very difficult for you to perform. Look at my son, Angadā, lying on the ground with tearful eyes. He is a tender boy, he has been brought up in affluence and deserves to be happy. He is dearer to me than life. I leave him behind and I ask you to protect him as your son under all circumstances and to give him what he may ask of you. Now, you are his protector and you are like a father unto him, giver of everything. If he is frightened at any time, remove his fear as I used to do. This handsome lad is quite heroic like you, and will help you in the destruction of the Rakshasas. He is younger and powerful and will perform feats like myself on the field of battle. Sushena's daughter, Tara, is an adept

in ascertaining subtle meaning of things, and is capable of giving sound advice in times of difficulty and what she may advise know to be the best and follow it without hesitation. Let not her words go in vain. It is also your duty to work fearlessly for Rama, or you will be guilty of sin, and if he is insulted in any way it will surely do you harm. Now, put on this heavenly gold-necklace, with the glory of victory attached to it, as after my death it will lose that halo by coming in contact with my corpse."

When Vali said these out of brotherly love, the fire of enmity was extinguished in Sugriva, his joy of victory was gone, and he became extremely sad like the moon in the eclipse, and after taking the gold chain he began to nurse his elder brother as the occasion required. After this, Vali seeing that his end was near, addressing Angada affectionately, said, "My boy ! Now try to possess proper knowledge of time and place and being indifferent to good and evil, and bearing with fortitude both pleasure and pain you should place yourself entirely at Sugriva's service. I have reared you up till now, it is now your time to do your duty, or Sugriva will never have any regard for you, if you neglect your duties. You should keep yourself aloof from the enemies of Sugriva, and should loyally serve your master by suppressing greed and other selfish desires.. Do not be too intimate with Sugriva, nor be wanting in friendship. Too much of everything is bad, hence you should always follow the golden mean."

By this time Vali's eyes became expanded and teeth disclosed, he then gave up his ghost in great pain.

Then the Vanaras, at the death of their chief, burst into tears saying, "Alas ! The king of the Kapis has ascended to heaven, and the city of Kishkindhya has grown dark. Hills and dales appear to be lonely, and we too have grown inert ! How could that great warrior die at all who removed our fears by killing the wicked Gandharva named Golaha after a strenuous fight for full fifteen years ?"

The Vanaras became extremely depressed and restless like so many wild cows in a forest infested with lions, when the bull of their herd is killed.

At that time, Tara gazing upon the countenance of her dead husband, was plunged into an ocean of grief and fell upon the ground by embracing her lord, as a tender creeper for its support twines round a broken tree.

CHAPTER XVIII

TARA'S GRIEF

Then the famous Tara after kissing Vali's mouth, addressing her dead husband, said, "My lord ! O how painful ! You are lying on hard, uneven ground strewn with gravels, for disregarding my words ; or perhaps you love the earth more since you are lying in her embrace and never even care to talk to me ! O brave hero ! It is really a wonder that Rama could be won over by Sugriva, but henceforth Sugriva will be

reckoned as a hero ! Those Bhallukas and Vanaras that used to wait upon you, now mourn thy loss. Angada is crying in grief and I am lamenting bitterly, but how is it that thou hast not still awakened at the sound of our cries ? It is the bed of the heroes, which, formerly in battle, thou didst cause thine enemies to lie upon, but, at last, thou art stretched upon it ! Thou wert born of a noble family and wert greatly fond of war, but where hast thou gone leaving me thus destitute and lonesome ? Let not prudent people henceforward marry their daughters to warriors. Just look at me, I was the wife of a hero, but just now have turned a widow ! My dignity and happiness are gone and I have been thrown into an ocean of grief. Perhaps, my heart is made of adamant, for it is not as yet rent into hundred pieces beholding my husband dead ! My lord ! Thou wert my friend, and husband is most dear to a woman, but alas ! thou art now dead. The woman who has lost her husband may possess sons or wealth, but still she is called a poor widow by the wise. O hero ! Thou art lain in a pool of blood, issued from your own body, as if you are lying on a red sheet dyed with lac. You are besmeared with dust and blood, and I cannot embrace you with my weak arms. Alas ! The cause of Sugriva's fear has been removed to-day by a single shaft of Rama. Sugriva has at last, been victorious in mortal enmity. O hero ! The arrow has stuck deep into your heart, I am afraid you may feel pain if I touch your body, so I have refrained from it, and am simply gazing upon you from a distance."

Thereupon, Nala extracted the arrow from Vali's body, like the dreadful snake that had entered a mountain cave. The arrow was red with blood and tinged with the rays of the dying sun. As soon as the arrow was drawn out, jets of blood began to flow from the wound like torrents of water from a rock coloured with minerals and red earth. Vali was all over covered with dust due to the duel. Tara brushed them gently with her palms and washed them with her tears. Then addressing the brown-eyed Angada said :

"My boy ! Look, the last stage of the king has arrived. This day has witnessed the end of his sinful enmity. Now, the great hero, resplendent as the newly risen sun, is leaving for the next world ; just pay your last homage to him." Thus being directed, Angada took up his father's feet in his plump round arms uttering his name.

Thereupon, Tara said, "My lord ! Angada is bowing at your feet, but why do you not, as before, bless him saying, 'May you live long.' Alack ! As a cow with her calf stands by the side of her bull slain by a lion, so I am standing before you with my son. You commenced the sacrifice of battle, but how could you at the end bathe in the stream of Rama's shafts without me ?" Why do I not see that golden chain that was presented to you by Indra being pleased with your valour in

1 After the performance of a sacrifice or religious rite the performer takes his bath with his wife, otherwise those will be incomplete. Hence a Sanskrit expression for wife is *Sahadharmini* or a help-mate in religion. —

battle ? Thou art dead, but royal splendour still lingers in you, as the resplendent rays never forsake the dying sun. You neglected what I said for your well-being, nor could I at that time prevent you from fight, so I am now doomed with Angada, and the royal fortune has at last forsaken me along with you."

CHAPTER XIX

SUGRIVA'S REPENTANCE

Tara wept being deeply distressed with sorrow. At that sight, Sugriva was greatly pained and became extremely sorry for the death of his brother, and went to Rama with his followers. The generous-hearted Rama had royal signs on his person and held a formidable bow and arrows dreadful like snakes. "O king ! Your promise has been fulfilled, I have got the kingdom, Vali has been killed, but the mind of this unfortunate self is extremely vapid. Queen Tara is crying incessantly, the citizens are crying aloud. The king is dead and prince Angada's life is at stake. Then what shall I do now with the kingdom ? Formerly, being insulted I grew impatient and angry and for that I agreed to the death of my brother, but I have become greatly penitent for it. It is now better for me to retire to the Rishyamuka for good. There I shall any how pass my days by adopting the vocation of my race. Even heaven does not now appear covetable to me for the death of my brother. That intelligent hero told me, 'Go away, I won't destroy you.' To speak the truth, these words were worthy of him, but my act and my words only become me. Can a man even whose greed for enjoy-

ment is great, taking into consideration the pleasures of kingdom and the pain inflicted by death wish for the death of his accomplished brother ? Vali had not the least desire to kill me, fearing that his influence might in any way be curtailed, but what a hateful thing I have committed through my wicked perversity. When I was running away being struck with the branch of a tree, and giving vent to my rage against you, Vali consoling me said, 'Go, never do it again.' In fact Vali all along maintained his brotherly love, honesty and piety but I have betrayed lust, anger and my apish nature. My friend ! As Indra, the king of the celestials became guilty of iniquity by slaying Viswarupa, so I have committed unthinkable, unoxpiable, undesirable, and most reprehensible sin by killing my brother. The earth, water, trees and women took share of Indra's sin but who will participate in the sin of a Kapi ? Who will bear this burden ? Having perpetrated such an unrighteous act as the destruction of my line, I do not deserve any respect from my subjects Not to speak of sitting on the throne, I do not deserve even to be nominated as heir-apparent to the throne. I have committed a hateful sin, condemned by all people and it will deprive me of all bliss in the next world. As a volume of water always tends downwards, so the mighty stream of grief has borne me down. The sin of fratricide like an elephant with its tusks of penitence, is striking me like unto the bank of a muddy stream. Alack ! As fire drives alloy from gold so sin has driven away all virtue from me It is for me that these powerful

Vanaras and Angada are almost half-dead with sorrow. A good and obedient son may easily be had, but a son, like Angada, is never to be found. Alas ! Is there any such place where one can get his brother ?

“O friend ! The heroic Angada won't survive this day. If he does survive, Tara may live, or she will die in grief for her son. I, therefore, wish to enter into fire in order to place me on the same level with my brother and his son. These Vanaras under your directions will search for Sita. They will carry out your work even after my death. Do thou please approve my proposal, as it is really disgusting and painful for me to live, guilty of destroying my own line.”

Hearing these words of Sugriva, overwhelmed with grief, Rama, the protector of the world, became distressed in mind and his eyes grew dim with tears and in great anxiety he repeatedly looked to the tearful Tara, weighed down with sorrow.

At that time, gazelle-eyed, brave Tara lay embracing Vali on the ground. Thereupon, the chief Counsellors of the Vanaras raised her up, and as they were conducting her to a different place, Tara saw Rama standing at a little distance holding bow and arrow in his hand, resplendent with his own effulgence like the glowing sun. Seeing him (hitherto never seen before) marked with all the signs of royalty, she recognised him to be Rama. Being quite disregardful of her person on account of deep sorrow, in faltering gait she approached the high-souled and pure Rama mighty as Indra and being overwhelmed with sorrow and distress said :

"O hero ! You are highly virtuous, there is no limit to your good qualities, you have controlled your senses and your fame is everlasting and wide, you are forgiving like the earth, you have a strong physique and your eyes are crimson, you have surpassed the beauty of a mortal being and have got the celestial beauty of a heavenly angel. You have bow and arrows in your hand, now put an end to my life with that shaft with which you have slain Vali, for being dead I shall be close to him, and he will never talk to any other woman but myself. O lotus-eyed hero ! In the heavenly region the nymphs in their glittering apparels will approach Vali, adorning their hair with red blossoms and wearing shining coronets on their heads. But as he is greatly distressed by my absence, he would not feel happy at their sight, or in their company. O hero ! As you have been distressed with sorrow for Janaki in this romantic Hilly Valley, Vali too in heaven will likewise be sorry and grow pale for me. Thou knowest how a handsome man becomes afflicted on account of the separation of his wife.

"I, therefore, entreat you to kill me also. Vali will never be able to bear my absence. O noble-minded one ! Never think that by killing me, you will incur the sin of slaying a woman, but if you destroy me, considering me to be the soul of Vali, you will not be guilty of any iniquity for killing a woman. You see, the husband and the wife are quite inseparable and this is proved by the authority of the Vedas and by their equal rights in the sacrifice. On this earth there is not a

better gift to the wise man than a wife, and, for religious merit, you just give me my dear one, and by virtue of this gift you will not be guilty of any impiety. O hero ! I am helpless and overwhelmed with sorrow, and I am now being dragged away from my husband, so do not be indifferent about my death. I shall not retain my life in absence of the gifted Vali, whose gait was (majestic) like that of a great tusker, and who used to wear a gold necklace worthy of a chief."

At this Rama tried to console Tara with reasonable words : "O the darling of a hero ! Do not entertain such a dark design. God has created all beings and He has bound them with pleasure and pain. All created beings are under His law and none can override Divine dispensation. By the grace of God you will be happy and your son Angada will be declared as heir-apparent to the throne. You are the spouse of a hero, so you should not lament like this."

Tara, who was shedding ceaseless tears, thus being consoled by mighty Rama, controlled her grief.

CHAPTER XX

CONSOLATION BY RAMA

Then Rama being grieved with great sorrow said to Sugriva and Angada in consoling words. "You see sorrow and lamentations do no good to the dead—try to do what is now necessary to perform. It is not proper to violate popular practice which you have observed so long. Don't waste any further time. Delay may interrupt the performance of due rites. You see

Time is all-powerful in this world. It is Time that creates, it is Time that accomplishes everything, and it is Time that leads all creatures to action. In fact none can do anything overriding the elements of Time. Man is governed by his fate, the fruit of his actions in his previous birth and Time works in concert with fate. Time is eternal it is partial to none, it is no productive cause or power in itself, friendship or kinship cannot obstruct it, it is quite beyond any body's control, but wise people perceive the consequences of their works done in time. Religion, Wealth and Desire are subject to it. Vali by virtue of his royal accomplishments, such as forgiveness and charity, enjoyed wealth and happiness on earth. Now by leaving the world he has got his real self (or true state). He had conquered heaven by his virtues, now by resigning his body on the field of battle, he has really occupied it. What has happened to that high-souled Vali's luck is the proper award of Time. So don't grieve for it. It is proper to perform those duties which appertain to the present occasion or time."

Then Lakshmana gently said to Sugriva, benumbed with sorrow, "Sugriva ! Now perform the cremation ceremony of Vali with Tara and Angada. Procure sufficient dry fuel and sandal wood. Angada has been distressed by the death of his father ; just console him. This city belongs to you, so do not be dead and inert with grief. Angada ! Now procure garland, cloth, clarified butter, oil and other scented articles. O Tara ! Bring a conveyance soon, utmost haste is necessary

now. Let only the capable and strong Vanaras carry Vali, and let the hearse-carriers get themselves dressed.

Saying this Lakshmana went near Rama and stood by him. Under these directions of Lakshmana, Tara in reverential mood entered a cave and brought out a conveyance. The conveyance was worthy of being carried by heroes. It looked like a large beautifully constructed chariot. It had a precious seat inside worthy of a king and had various designs of birds, trees and of warriors wrought around it. It was built with great skill. Its joints were strong and it was decorated with excellent ornamental works. It had latticed windows. It was decorated profusely with floral wreaths, garlands of lotuses and various precious clothes. It was sprinkled with red sandal paste, and over it was spread a saffron-coloured canopy like the halo of a rising sun. Seeing that conveyance Rama said to Lakshmana, "My boy ! Soon take the body of Vali to the cremation-ground and perform his funeral rites." Thereupon, Sugriva with tears along with Angada, placed Vali on the hearse and decked his body with garlands and ornaments, and addressing the carriers, Sugriva said, "Go now to the bank of the river and perform his funeral rites. Let the Vanaras proceed in front of the hearse by distributing precious jewels and let them cremate the body of their lord with all the pomp and grandeur worthy of a wealthy monarch."

Thereupon, the carriers proceeded with the hearse and other Vanaras, as if rendered shelterless, followed the hearse in tears. At this, the Vanara women living

under Vali cried in distress, "Alas, O hero, O, alas." Tara and other queens followed the coffin weeping, and for their cries the forest and the hill seemed to bewail for Vali.

When they all arrived at the bank of a river, the Vanaras prepared a funeral pyre on its sacred bank washed by the waters of the stream. The carriers then lowered the hearse from their shoulders and stood aside with grief-stricken hearts.

Then Tara seeing her husband's body placed upon the hearse, took up his head upon her lap and broke forth with a distressed heart, "Ah chief of the Kapis ! O hero ! Ah, my husband ! Please cast your look once upon me. You used to love me very dearly, now I have been greatly distressed by your death, just look at me once. You are dead, but it seems your countenance is still lit up with smiles, and you still look ruddy like the rising sun, as you looked while alive. Now, Death himself in the garb of Rama has snatched you from our midst, and we all have been rendered husbandless by the stroke of a single shaft ! Alas ! Those Vanara women with their moon-like faces were very dear unto you. They are not accustomed to walk fast and they have come a great distance on foot, and don't you perceive this ? Look at Sugriva. See Tara and other counsellors and the grief-afflicted citizens stand round you. Now despatch them first and after they are dismissed from view we shall dally in amorous sports in the forest."

Tara was thus bewailing in grief at the sight of

which other Vanara women were smitten with sorrow and conducted her to another place.

There Angada with tearful eyes with the help of Sugriva placed the body of his father on the funeral pyre and after setting fire to it with due rites he circumambulated round the funeral pyre of his father, bound for the eternal journey.

After this, the Vanaras after cremating the body of Vali duly went to the stream for *Tarpana* (for performing watery rites to the spirit of Vali) and placing Angada ahead of them, Sugriva with Tara performed the *Tarpana*

Thus mighty Rama being stricken with sorrow like Sugriva, had all the obsequial ceremonies of Vali performed by the Vanaras.

CHAPTER XXI

SUGRIVA'S CORONATION

Sugriva was overwhelmed with grief and as he was putting on a piece of wet cloth, the Chief Counsellors surrounded him and approached Rama. Then as the saints with joined palms approach Brahma, Hanuman with a glowing, red face like the rising sun and who looked like a golden peak addressing Rama humbly said, "Rama ! It is through your favour that Sugriva has got back his vast ancestral kingdom. This kingdom could not be conquered by the Vanaras of beautiful teeth, but it has been subjected to their control through your favour. Now permit Sugriva to carry on the royal duties along with his friends in the city. He has taken

his bath and he will worship you with perfumes, garlands and jewels. Please enter that beautiful cave and delight the Vanaras by conferring the kingdom on his hands and making him lord."

Thereupon, the noble Rama spoke unto Hanuman, "I shall not enter any city or village so long as I observe the mandate of my father. Let Sugriva enter the rich city and there you install him duly on the throne."

Saying this to Hanuman, Rama turned to Sugriva and said, "My friend! Nominate mighty Angada as heir-apparent to the throne. This heroic and gentle prince is worthy of being your heir-apparent.

"He is the eldest son of Vail and he is like his father in heroism and prowess, so he will surely be able to bear the heavy burden of a kingdom. The rainy season has now set in and ever-drizzling Sravana is the first of the four rainy months and military expedition is forbidden in this month. So you now repair to Kishkindhya and let us put up in the hills. This tableland¹ is spacious and beautiful and there is no scarcity of water of fresh air, and there is profusion of lotuses here."

"We shall live here, do you now go home, rule over your kingdom and enhance the delight of your friends, and when the month of the Karttika (the Autumn) comes, make arrangements for the destruction of Ravana. Let this programme remain settled between us."

Thereupon having thus obtained premisson of Rama Sugriva went to Kishkindhya (so long) protected by Vali.

¹ The word in the original means a cave. It denotes a cosy place of habitation.

The Vanaras also entered the city by surrounding Sugriva. The subjects bowed down lowering their heads at the sight of the Vanara king. He responded to their greetings, raised them up and entered the palace.

Then friends of Sugriva busied themselves with the coronation ceremony of Sugriva. Golden umbrella, golden staff, white chowris, sixteen virgins, various jewels, different seeds, medicinal herbs, condensed milk, sprouts of plants, white clothes, sandal, sweet-scented garlands, both aquatic and land flowers, fried paddy, *Priyadgu* creeper, honey, clarified butter, curd, tiger-skin, fine pair of sandals, Kumkuma, red powder, Gorochana (a bright yellow fragrant thing prepared from cow's urine), unguents dyed with various flies and Arsenic, golden ores were brought. Then the friends and relations of Sugriva commenced the coronation ceremony of Sugriva by entertaining the Brahmanas with profusion of eatables and by the distribution of apparels. Those who were conversant with the Mantras, began to perform sacrifice by placing fire on the sacred Kusha grass.

Then Gaya, Gyvaksha, Gavaya, Dharabha, Gandhamadana, Vainda, Dvividha, Hanuman and Jamyuman made Sugriva seated on a golden seat, facing the east upon the roof of the palace, decorated with wreaths and draped with excellent coverings. The water of the rivers of the places of pilgrimage, of the seven seas, and sweet-scented crystal water was collected in golden jars. The Vanaras with that water and with corns invested the crown on Sugriva as the celestials did on

Indra according to the rules laid down by the sages. The Vanaras became mightily pleased at this.

After this, Sugriva declared Angada as heir-apparent to the throne according to the directions of Rama. Thereupon every one spoke highly of Sugriva and praised Rama and Lakshmana repeatedly. At that time, every one at Kishkindhya, felt happy and the whole city was decorated with flags.

Thus when the coronation ceremony was over, Sugriva sent information to the magnanimous Rama that he had got back the kingdom along with his wife, Ruma.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PRASEAVANA HILL

In the meantime, Rama with Lakshmana retired to the Prasravana hill dense with trees, creepers and shrubs and resounded with the deep roars of lions and tigers. There bears, monkeys, wild cats and *gopuchhas* were to be found straying about hither and thither. Rama selected a spacious cave for habitation and addressing Lakshmana said, "My boy! It is a spacious and beautiful cave, and there is plenty of breeze. We shall pass the rainy season here. Look! How excellent is its peak! Various kinds of minerals, and white, red and black stones abound in it. There is plenty of river-frogs, and various flower trees and creepers, such as Malati, Kunda, Sindhuvara, Sirisha, Kadamva, Arjuna, Sarjana adorn the place. O gentle one! This cave is worthy of our habitation having

its north-eastern part low and the western part high. At the entrance of the cave, there is a spacious smooth stone, black as collyrium paste. Near about the cave lies a pond full of full-blown lotuses and there the sweet notes of birds and cries of wild peacocks are continually heard. There is a beautiful peak on the north of the cave ; it is of lustrous hue like collyrium, and appears as if a deep blue cloud had risen in the sky ! Behold ! There is another peak on the south. It is silvery white and shining with various metals, as if it is extending its head like the Kailasa mountain. In front of the cave, a stream like the Mandakini in the Chitrakuta hill is flowing towards the west. It is free from weeds and along both its banks stand Sandals, Tilakas, Salas, Atimuktas, Saralas, Padmakas, Vaniras, Stimidas, Vakulas, Ketakas, Hintalas, Sirishas, Kadamvas, Vetasas, Kritamalakas and other trees and plants. This river is beautiful like a well-dressed damsel. Chakrabakas, swans and cranes always sport in its water and on account of precious gems found in it everywhere, it appears as if the stream is smiling. Here, it is covered with blue lotuses, there have bloomed the red ones, there the stream is white with lilies and lotuses. It is visited by aquatic birds and by hermits for bath."

"My boy ! Behold the beautiful Sandal trees, and the Kukubha trees rising high as if in jest. It is a very beautiful place and we shall happily live here. At a short distance, is situated the woody Kishkindhya. Listen to the music rising from there and the voices of the

Vanaras in accompaniment of Mridanga.¹ Sugriva has got back his kingdom and wife. He is now master of immense wealth and is passing his days in enjoyment with his friends."

Thus Rama concluded, and decided to pass his days in the Prasravana hill. The hill was indeed a pretty one and there were various pleasant objects near about, but Rama could not in any way feel happy. He pined in grief for Janaki—who was ever present in his memory. Rama witnessed the moon rising in the sky. He stretched himself on the bed, but could not sleep. His grief seemed to be rekindled into fierce flames and he began to shed ceaseless tears.

Seeing that, Lakshmana, deeply smitten with sorrow, entreatingly said, "O hero ! Don't be overwhelmed with grief. It is not unknown to you that too much grief destroys everything. You are decent, energetic and have regard for everyday duties. Now if you lose your energy on account of grief, you would not be able to destroy that shrewd Rakshasas in battle. So banish your sorrows, retain your energy and you will be able to destroy the Rakshasas with his whole brood. Not to speak of him, you will be able to destroy even the whole world (if you please). It is now rainy season, wait for the autumn, and when autumn comes you will destroy Ravana with his family and the chiefs under him. O worshipful one ! I am only trying to rouse your talent valour, as at the time of sacrifice people

1 A musical instrument to keep time like the tambour.

rekindle the sacrificial fire covered with ashes by offering oblations to it."

At this, Rama praised Lakshmana greatly for his reasonable words and said, "My boy ! You have said what a well-wisher and a devoted hero should speak. Do not cast off this grief standing in the way of action. It is no doubt necessary to display one's full prowess when occasion for putting forth one's valour arises. I agree to your words and shall wait for autumn and for Sugriva's pleasure. Heroes never forget the favour they have received from others, but if they be ungrateful good people are pained by it."

Thereupon, beautiful Lakshmana greatly eulogised Rama for his cogent words evincing his good sense and said, "O Arya ! Your object will soon be gained with the help of Sugriva and your enemies will be destroyed. Somehow pass the rains in expectation of the autumn. So now forbear your wrath and live with patience these months of rain in this hill frequented by lions.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RAINS

Rama dwelling on the summit of the Malyavan hills, addressing Lakshmana, said, "My boy ! The rains have set in. The sky is overcast with clouds like the ranges of mountains. The sky after drinking the humour of the ocean through the sun's rays was enceinte for nine months and is now delivering its showers. Ascending the sky with the flights of clouds one may adorn the sun with Kutaja and Arjuna flowers. See how delightful

twilight is reflected from the cool evening clouds with amber fringes ; it seems as if the wound of the sky has been dressed with a piece of torn cloth (clouds crimsoned with blood-like evening rays). The whole firmament appears to be pining in love, pale—sprinkled with the evening rays like sandal, and heaving sighs in the form of soft breezes. The earth was scorched with heat and now being wet with showers is emitting vapour like hot perspiration of Sita, racked with grief. The delicious, gentle breeze perfumed with Ketaki blossom and cold for blowing through the camphor boughs can literally be drunk, from the cup made by the hollows of the palms by knitting them together. The hill is covered with Arjuna and Ketaki flowers and being bathed with rains appears like the anointed Sugriva bathed in showers. This hill having clouds for black deer-skin, stream of water for sacred thread and the sound of the wind blowing at the mouth of the cave appears like a Brahmana engaged in studies ! Being struck by lightning as if by golden lashes, the sky neighs like a horse. The lightning in the deep blue clouds appears like Janaki on the lap of Ravana ! The moon and the stars are not visible, they have disappeared in clouds.

“Look ! The Kutaja blossoms have bloomed over the peak and are covered with the vapour rising from the ground : the earth appears to have been gladdened at the advent of rains. I am now overwhelmed with grief for Janaki and the sight of these flowers makes me extremely sad. There is no more dust, the air is exceedingly

cool, the heat and evils of summer have subsided. Kings have entirely abstained from their expeditions and people living in foreign lands are returning home, and the Chakravakas eager for the Manasa lake are flying thither with their mates. The roads are muddy, hence hardly a conveyance plies through them ; some parts of the sky are bright while other parts are dark with clouds ; so it looks like a tranquil sheet of water locked in rocks. The mountain streams are most impetuous now, their waters have turned red being tinged with various mineral dyes ; and Sarala and Kadamva flowers are floating on their waters, and the peacocks are crying (in wild glee) on their banks. Ripe and juicy blackberries, dark s bees, and ripe mangoes are falling on the ground by force of the wind.

Look ! The cloud, huge as a hill, is adorned with lightnings as flags and cranes as wreathers, and emitting roars like an elephant on the field of battle.

"How beautiful the forest appears in the evening, the ground is covered with green turfs and wet with dews and the peacocks dance over it ! The clouds being heavy with rains, are journeying with a deep rumbling sound by resting repeatedly on the high cliffs.¹ The cranes are flying in delight under the clouds and they

¹ This piece beginning from here till the end of this chapter, in all probability, is an interpolation by a subsequent writer, and its description bears some analogy with that of famous Meghaduta. Kalidas thus asks the cloud : "I am speaking of the path alone which thou wilt have to go resting thy feet on mountains whenever thou wilt feel tired."

appear like a garland of lotuses shaken by the breeze hanging under the sky. The earth being covered with grass and variegated with new-born insects, look like a damsel clothed in parrot-like green cloth with pink stripes of lac-dye. Sleep is approaching God Narayana, the ocean, the river, the delighted cranes, the cloud, and all look beautiful to the eye. Kadamvas have bloomed in the woods, the peacocks hold their dances, and the bull betrays his profound attachment for the heifer, and the fields have grown exceedingly beautiful with corns.

"Wild infuriated elephants are emitting terrific roars. By the side of the rill, elephants delighted with the fragrance of Ketaki and maddened with the sound of the water-falls are gambling with the peacocks. Lovers pining for their sweethearts are sad and the Vanaras are very happy. The black bees lying flat on the blossoming branches of the Kadamva are belching for having drunk too much floral juice in festive joy, and the bees sticking to boughs of the ripe black-berries, as glowing embers, seem eager even to devour the branches. The cloud with lightning appears like a charging elephant. Look, an elephant was about to enter the woods but hearing the deep rumbling of the cloud, he took it to be his rival and at once turned round for a fight. The forest now presents a variegated view, resonant with the humming of the bees and cries of the peacocks. Here the spot is full of water and is surrounded by the blossoming Kadamvas, Sarjas, Arjunas and

Kandalas and there are songs and dancings of the peacocks and it appears like a drinking place.

"The wings of the birds have grown pale with rains and when they are thirsty they drink in delight drops of water hanging like pearls on the leaves. Hark, as if a musical concert is being played in the woods,—the humming of the bees is its lyre, the croaking of the frogs is its guttural sound, rumblings of the cloud are the sounds of Mridanga. Sometimes dancing, sometimes emitting shrill cries, sometimes perching on the tops of the trees, the beautiful peacocks have commenced the music of the forest. Aroused from their long sleep by the rumbling noise of the clouds, frogs are uttering various cries being smitten with rains. The river is proudly flowing towards the sea—its lord—carying the Chakravakas on its stream, and its banks are falling in the water. Deep blue clouds heavy with water rest upon clouds of similar nature. The bees after embracing the lotus with its filaments washed with rains are flocking to the Kadamvas adorned with pollens. The elephants are infuriated, the bulls are happy, the hills are lovely, the princes are now idle. At this time Indra sports with the clouds. Clouds heavy with rain hang low in the sky and thunder like the deep roarings of the sea floods the earth with rivers, lakes, tanks, and pools. Rains fall heavily, the wind blows hard, and the rivers pull down their banks. The mountain like a king is exhibiting his beauty and wealth, being bathed with water from the cloud-jars sent by Indra and brought by the wind. The earth has been gratified with recent

showers, and the sky has become dark with clouds. The streams running in the hills appear like strings of pearls, and stones tumbling down on account of the current of the stream appears like a torn necklace ! Streams of water everywhere, as if the pearl-necklace of a heavenly nymph has been broken asunder in times of amorous dalliance. The birds have taken shelter in the trees, the lotuses are closed and the Malati has blossomed, so it appears the sun is about to set. Kings have now refrained from military expeditions, and troops have halted in their march as if being obstructed simultaneously by rains, enmity and (bad) paths. Those Brahmanas who chant the Sama hymns were waiting for the month of *Bhadra* ; now their time for the study of the Vedas has arrived. At this time, Bharata, the king of Koshala, having repaired to his house and having stored all provisions is now observing religious rites in *Ashadha*. The Sarazu is now brimful with rains and surging with currents, as if Ayodhya herself is making a noise in delight. Great is the beauty of the Rains. Sugriva is now enjoying himself, his ambition for victory has been fulfilled, he has got back his wife and regained a vast kingdom. But, my boy ! I have lost my kingdom and Janaki. I am overwhelmed with grief. The rains will not soon be over, Ravana is a formidable foe, so there is no probability of destroying my enemy. Sugriva is no doubt faithful to me, but on account of the rains, the time is unfit for journey and way-faring is most difficult. I cannot even mention anything about the search of Sita. Besides, Sugriva after great pains and

sufferings has regained his wife, and my mission is an arduous one ; so I do not wish to speak anything now. After enjoying sufficient rest Sugriva will himself search for Sita in due time. He is grateful and will never forget my help. Lakshmana ! This is why I shall bide my time, awaiting Sugriva's pleasure and the autumn. The heroic nature never forgets the debt of gratitude.*

At this Lakshmana, of winning looks, greatly praised Rama's speech, and showing proofs of his intelligence said, "O Arya ! Your object of desire will soon be attained by the help of Sugriva. So anyhow pass the rains in expectation of the autumn."

CHAPTER XXIV

HANUMAN'S ADVICE

Here Sugriva after the destruction of Vali got his kingdom. His object of desire has been attained, and he passed his days in joy with his darling Ruma, with much-coveted Tara and other women, as Indra lives in the midst of the heavenly nymphs. He was himself far removed from all anxieties, his kingdom was entrusted to the hands of his ministers, he was quite indifferent about the supervision of their works and had no suspicion about them, rather had the fullest confidence in them. At that time, he was not anxious for acquisition of wealth or religious merit, but being addicted to pleasure he preferred undisturbed seclusion always.

After some time, Hanuman, the son of Marut, versed in the sacred lore and polity and having sense

of proper time for each work, finding the sky clear, free from clouds and lightning and lit up with the rays of moon, and finding the Sarasas missing the welcome drops of rain, approached Sugriva and addressing him with sweet, and well-meaning words which were calculated to teach the ways of acquiring piety, forgiveness, equity and other virtues, said :

"O king ! Thou hast acquired kingdom, lasting reputation and vast wealth. You should now try to acquire friends. His wealth, influence and fame increase who renders friendly help in time. He indeed acquires vast territory with the help of wealth, friends and power of chastisement, who has free and clear intelligence. O chief of the Kapis, you are virtuous and gentle. It is your duty to fulfil your promise to your friend. Many a trouble occurs to him who does not do the work of his friend, renouncing all other things. Delay defeats the end of an action, and no great result follows even if something significant is accomplished. We are delaying in rendering our services to our friend, so you should now be up and doing in searching for Janaki. O destroyer of enemies ! The time for performing your friend's work will soon be over. The wise Rama fully knows the value of time and is quite conversant with the seasonableness of a thing. Still he has not told you anything even finding that the season is over though utmost alacrity should be observed. He is as yet patiently waiting for you. He is the cause of your prosperity, he is a friend in your adversity, there is no limit to his goodness and really wonderful is his nature. He has

done much for you in the past, you should now help him in return, and should send the chief Vanaras in search for Janaki. Delay before he openly speaks about it won't be so much culpable as after the actual expression of his wish. O king ! You perform even his work who has not rendered you any help, now what shall I say about him who has destroyed your enemy and restored you to the throne ? You are a hero and you ought not to wait for Rama's orders just for his satisfaction. Rama, by dint of arms, can subdue even the gods and the Demons, but he is simply waiting for your promise. He has helped you a good deal by destroying Vali even at the risk of public opprobrium ? We should, therefore, search heaven and earth for Janaki. Wonderful is the prowess of Rama. Not to speak of the Rakshasas, even the gods fear his might. Do what is agreeable to him with all your heart. There are many irresistible Vanaras under your command, and none will be able to thwart their course in heaven and on earth. Now, just direct us what we are to do."

The intelligent Sugriva agreed to this reasonable proposal of Hanuman and asked the energetic Neela to mobilise the Vanara troops from different quarters. "Do thou now see that my army with their captains arrive here without delay. Let the Vanaras from distant places march here soon, and when they arrive, you yourself count their numbers. Whoever will fail to reach here within fifteen days will be punished with death. Go now with Angada to fetch the Vanaras."

Thus giving directions to Neela, the heroic Sugriva retired to the inner apartments of the palace.

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE AUTUMN

Here Rama was racked with grief at the advent of the autumn. Rama observed the pink-yellow sky, the bright lunar disc, and the sweet autumnal night white with the rays of the moon. He then thought about the amorous sports of Sugriva and about the quest of Sita and concluded that the time for marshalling the army was over. He was greatly smitten with sorrow and being almost stupefied with grief thought of Sita dwelling in his heart. Being seated on a peak shining with minerals, Rama broke forth in bitter lamentations at the sight of the beauties of the autumn with a distressed mind :

"Alas ! Who with her sweet Sarasa-like voice used to warble with the Sarasas (cranes) in the hermitage, who was delighted by the sight of the golden blossomed Asana trees and who was roused from her sleep by the sweet cacklings of ducks and swans, I know not how that sweet damsel is faring now in my absence ! How will she, with lotus-like eyes, survive hearing the notes of the Chakravakas living in pairs ? In her absence, I am not feeling happy even at the sight of the hills, rivers and forests. She is most tender, so must have been greatly distressed by the grief of separation, and her sorrows will be greatly increased by the advent of the autumn.

"As the Chataka bird becomes anxious for drops of water from the cloud, so Rama grew anxious for Sita. By that time the graceful Lakshmana returned after

gathering fruits in the hill, and found Rama plunged in intense grief. He was greatly pained at the sight and addressing him said, "O worshipful one ! What will you gain by yielding to the pangs of love ? Why do you allow your manliness thus to be overcome ? Now concentrate your mind upon action ; grief is undermining your power of concentration which alone can put an end to all sorrows. Be cheerful and energetic and resort to your manliness, the only means of accomplishing your task. O hero ! Janaki is your wife and nobody can possess her, for who can escape from being scorched by touching the burning flame ?"

Rama hearing these words of Lakshmana which could not be easily dismissed, replied, "My boy ! Your words are reasonable, well-meaning and are consonant with morality, and it is proper that I should accede to them. It is necessary to acquire a vision of reality by the concentration of mind and to be engaged in work, and it is proper not to enquire about the consequence of an uncommon action."¹

Janaki's thoughts were ever uppermost in Rama's heart, and his countenance withered and grew thin. Addressing Lakshmana he said, "My boy ! Indra has drenched the earth with rains, and has produced crops.

1 Here is a piece of theology. Rama says that he will now try to acquire a knowledge of reality by meditation and by the concentration of mental faculties. Henceforth he will devote himself to action than waste his time in idle speculations about the far-reaching consequence of an act. The Geeta preaches the same doctrine.

Formerly, the clouds with their dark blue lotus-like hue enveloped all quarters, now they appear clear like an elephant devoid of temporal sweat. The wind has ceased to blow fast, carrying the fragrance of Kutaja and Arjuna flowers. Neighings of elephants, cries of peacocks, and the sounds of fountains have ceased. The hill with its cliffs washed with rains, free from impurities and being flooded with moonlight appear exceedingly beautiful. Today the autumn has appeared by dividing its beauty between the boughs of the Saptaparna trees, the brilliance of the sun, moon and stars and the gambols of the elephants. The lotuses have bloomed under the rays of the sun. Look, for the presence of the autumn the bees have resorted to the Saptaparna flowers and the humming noise of the bees are carried by the wind. Bulls and elephants have become proudly restive.

*Look! The Chakravakas have come from the Manasa lake, their bodies are covered with the pollens of lotuses, and spreading their large and beautiful wings they are resting on the banks of the rivers. The streams now are crystal clear. The peacocks finding the sky free from the clouds have discarded their tails, and appear quite anxious. They are even indifferent to their dear mates and have no hankering for enjoyment. Look, the topmost branches of the golden Asana trees are bent down with blossoms and sweet fragrance has filled the air. Just see how beautiful the forest appears with these trees! The elephants being infuriated and intoxicated with lust, are roaming

about with she-elephants in the woods, inhaling the odour of the Saptaparna flowers. The sky is bright as a sword, the current of the rivers has abated, and the cool autumnal breeze is laden with the sweet odour of the water-lilies. All quarters of the globe are now free from darkness. Mud has been dried by the rays of the sun, and dust has risen after a long time. It is now time for the belligerent kings to launch into action. The bulls look healthy at the advent of autumn, and they are sporting by rolling in the dust and bellowing in the midst of heifers in delightful expectation of a fight. Great attachment is shown by the she-elephants for their mates. The peacocks in sorrow flock to the river bank, but come back being reproached by the cranes. Infuriated elephants, emitting temporal sweat, are drinking in the lake by trampling down the lotuses, by putting the Karandavas and the Chakravakas into fright. Ducks and swans are sporting in the river which is now strewn with sands and free from mud. The breeze blows now gently, the fountains are dry, and the frogs are silent. Snakes of deadly venom, so long starved in their holes, are now out in quest of food. Look, how the evening, crimsoned by the dying rays of the sun, gently wanes in the sky, and one by one the stars are being revealed by the rays of the moon. The night appears like a woman in white, having for her countenance the beautiful moon and the stars for her eyes, and the soft moon light for her cloth ! The cranes having fed upon the ripe grains in delight are flying in rows

and appear like so many garlands shaken by the wind ! Look, how beautiful the lake appears ; there the lilies have bloomed and a swan sleeps amongst them ! The lake looks like the clear blue sky adorned with the moon and the stars, and the pool looks like an elegantly dressed courtesan adorned with ornaments, having the restless ducks for its (tinkling) zone, and the blooming lotuses for a garland ! The sound set up by the wind in the rocky cave, mingled with the music of a flute and the bellowings of a bull have swelled in volume. The Kasha flowers have bloomed on the river-bank and being waved by the breeze appear like a piece of white cloth shaken by the wind ! The bees, mad for having drunk honey are yellow with the pollens of the lotuses, and are proudly following the course of the wind with their mates. The water is crystal-clear, and lilies have bloomed in it. The paddy is ripe, the breeze is gentle, the moon is bright, and the notes of the Kraunchas are continually heard ; from these it appears that the rainy season is over. The river having fishes for its girdle, is flowing gently, like a damsel fatigued by enjoyment at night moves slowly in the morning. The waving Kasha flowers look like a white silken cloth and being strewn with the Chakravakas and moss, appear like the sweet countenance of a young bride decorated with ornamental pigments and delightful figures of leaves.¹ Cupid himself

1. Cf. Kumarsambhava and Meghaduta,—Patralakha is a kind of toilet, in which figures of delicate leaves were sometimes drawn on cheeks with sandal paste or orpiment. This practice may still be found in certain

seems to have appeared in the forest with his formidable bow to chastise the separated lovers ! Clouds have gratified all by pouring their contents and have disappeared by filling the rivers, lakes and pools. The river in the autumn is gradually showing its bank, as a bashful virgin being shy of the first union very slowly uncovers her thighs. This is the time for military expedition but I do not see Sugriva, or any preparation for it. Four months of rains appeared long as hundred years ; now the autumn has arrived and Asanas, Kovindaras, Saptaparnas, Bandhujivas and Tamalas have bloomed on the hill. Swans and cranes are sporting on the banks, but I am pining for Sita. Alas ! Where is she now, who had entered the inaccessible Dandaka forest as into a pleasure-garden and who followed me like a devoted Chakravaka bird ? Lakshmana ! I have lost my kingdom, fortune and Sita, still Sugriva is not doing me any favour. Perhaps, he is indifferent about me thinking that I am a foreigner, helpless, poor and distressed, and being insulted by Ravana, I have asked for his protection. He promised to help me in search for Janaki, but being himself crowned with success has forgotten his promise. Go now to Kishkindhya and tell that fool infatuated with vulgar pleasures,

parts of India where young boys and girls decorate their faces with ornamental impressions with white sandal paste after a dip in the Ganges. A similar custom was prevalent in England in Elizabethan times, when ladies sometimes used to adorn their faces with ornamental patches by sticking small bits of paper on them.

—Translator.

that he is a villain who breaks his promise made to his benefactor who in his turn solicits for a favour. Once a word, good or bad, escapes one's lips, he should stick to it, and that is the nature of a hero. Dogs and foxes tear off the flesh of that ungrateful wretch, after death, who is indifferent to his friend having himself gained his object. Ask him if he wants to witness my gold-plated bow like lightning. Does he want to hear the twang of my bow like the angry booming of a thunder ?

"Lakshmana ! It is really strange that Sugriva will be indifferent knowing that a hero like you is my helper whose valour he has sufficiently witnessed. I have contracted friendship with him for search of Janaki but he never thinks of redeeming his promise to me. Four months have elapsed, but Sugriva seems to have no knowledge of it, being addicted to pleasure. He has given himself up to drink and revelry with his friends and courtiers ; therefore, he does not feel any pity for us, racked with pain. Do thou repair to Kishkindhya, inform Sugriva of my wrath and tell him that the road trodden by Vali, after death, is not too narrow to allow him passage. Ask him to keep his promise and not to follow the path of his brother. I have slain Vali in battle and if he now shrinks from keeping his promise I shall destroy him with all his family and relations. My boy ! Do what you think best in the matter. I have become really impatient for this delay."

CHAPTER XXVI

LAKSHMANA'S WRATH

At this Lakshmana replied in wrath, "O Arya ! Certainly, Sugriva's sense is not commendable. If he does not behave properly and does not acknowledge that his fortune is due to his friendship, then he won't be able to enjoy royal wealth for a long time. Finding you not in any way offended, but favourably disposed, he has changed his mind and does not think of returning your benefits. So let him die and meet Vali after death. A kingdom should not be placed in the hands of such a worthless man. O worshipful one ! I can not control my anger I shall destroy that liar to-day. Let Vali's son, Angada, with the Vanaras search for Sita."

Saying this, the highly enraged Lakshmana stood up taking the bow and arrows in his hand.

Seeing that Rama gently said, "A man like you never commits such a sinful act. He who can subdue his anger according to the dictates of his conscience, ought not to think of destroying his friend - cultivate good feeling for his former services, give up your anger. Gently tell Sugriva only this, "Friend ! The time for the quest of Janaki is about to be over."

The obedient Lakshmana at once bowed down to Rama's words, but in anger he took up a Death-like formidable bow, as that of Indra. At that time, he looked like the high-peaked Mahendra hill ; wrath and despair began to scorch his heart like a burning flame. Wise as Vrihaspati, Lakshmana decided in his mind what he would say and what might Sugriva reply.

Burning with the smouldering fire of rage he proceeded with a sad mind in quick paces towards Kishkindhya. By the intensity of his speed he tore down rocks and trees and brushing aside every obstacle with proud steps, Lakshmana proceeded like a mighty elephant. The hill seemed to tremble under his heroic tread.

After sometime, the best of the lkshwakus beheld the inaccessible city of Kishkindhya, surrounded by the Vanaras and encircled by the hills. Lakshmana with his lips pressed in suppressed anger saw formidable Vanaras strolling outside the city-gate. Seeing Lakshmana they pulled up huge trees and rocks. Thereupon, Lakshmana was doubly inflamed with rage, as fire is fed with fuel, and his lips quivered in anger.

Then the Vanaras seeing Lakshmana thus enraged and terrible as Death were stricken with fear, and ran away in various directions. Thereupon, the chief of the Vanaras entered Sugriva's palace and sent information about Lakshmana's arrival and his anger. But at that time the Damorous king of the Vanaras was enjoying himself with Tara ; so he did not pay any heed to their words. After that, those Vanaras huge as clouds, came out of the city being directed by the ministers. Some of them were grim-visaged and had claws and teeth like those of a tiger, and some were strong as elephants. The heroic Lakshmana was greatly incensed at their sight. Then the Vanaras openly stationed themselves at the crossing of the ditch round the city wall. Then Lakshmana thinking of Sugriva's blunder and of his brother's interest pressed forward. His eyes became

red and he began to breathe hard. At that time, he looked like a fivehooded serpent having the sharp end of the arrow as his tongue, the bow for his expanded hood, and his valour for venom. Angada being greatly alarmed at this, approached Lakshmana with a distressed mind. Lakshmana with angry look said, "My boy! Go and quickly inform Sugriva of my arrival. Tell him that Lakshmana, being greatly distressed by his brother's sorrows, is standing at the gate, and if you please you may pay heed to his words now. Communicating this to Sugriva quickly come back to me."

Angada became restless at these hard expressions of Lakshmana. His face grew dark and he went to Sugriva, and bowing down to Tara and Ruma communicated everything to Sugriva. Sugriva was deeply buried in sleep under the influence of liquor and in amorous langour, so he could not catch even a syllable of what Angada had said.

The Vanaras welcomed Lakshmana with a gentle voice, and to rouse Sugriva from sleep they set up a terrible roar like the roarings of a thunder. Sugriva was then roused from sleep. His eyes were red with wine and he became restless at that noise.

At that time, two intelligent counsellors of Sugriva named Yaksha and Prabhava, of handsome looks, came with Angada hearing everything from the latter's lips. They sat before Sugriva and after greeting him, with sweet and cogent words said, "O king! Rama and Lakshmana, born of men, are kingly and firm in their

promises. They have conferred the kingdom on you. Lakshmana has come to submit something according to Rama's directions, and at his instance Angada came to you before. With his red angry eyes Lakshmana is scorching the Vanaras at the gate. So hasten to him so that his anger may be appeased. Do what the virtuous Rama has asked you to do and try to redeem your promise."

Hearing of Lakshmana's wrath, Sugriva immediately left his seat, and ascertaining the gravity of the present occasion, addressing his counsellors, Sugriva said, "You see, I have not said any improper thing to Lakshmana, nor have I behaved improperly with him. I do not know why he is angry. Perhaps some enemy of mine anxious to find out dark spots in me has poisoned his ears with a false report about me. Now someone amongst you according to his own intelligence try to ascertain the true cause of his anger. I am not afraid of Rama or of Lakshmana, but I do really fear the loss of friendship and then regret that a friend has been angry without any cause. It is easy to contract friendship, but it is very difficult to maintain it owing to the fickleness of mind. A very slight cause may bring about a rupture. I am grateful to Rama for his help and I have not as yet succeeded in doing anything in return, and for this have great misgivings in my mind."

Then Hanuman replied with reasonable words, "O king! It is no wonder that you have forgotten the favour you have received. For your interest the great Vali, mighty as the king of the gods, was destroyed by

the heroic Raghava, and I doubt not that he has been offended and so he has despatched Lakshmana for this. Look, the autumn has come.

"The Saptaparna has blossomed, the stars look bright. The lakes and rivers have become transparently clear, but you have not noticed all these on account of your hilarious enjoyment, and it seems you do not understand that this is the time for making military preparations. The heroic Lakshmana has come just to make you aware of your indifference. Rama is now extremely distressed with sorrow for being separated from his wife. So you must be prepared to hear a few hard expressions from Lakshmana's lips. You are guilty so try to appease Lakshmana with joined palms ; there is no other alternative. It is the duty of the ministers to give proper advice to the king ; hence I have given out the unalloyed truth without any hesitation. Rama in his anger can subdue the gods and the demons, but you have received his favour ; so it is your duty to please him in every possible way and not to provoke him in any manner. Do then now bow at his feet with your son and relations and be obedient to him, as a wife to her husband. O king, never try to set Rama and Lakshmana at naught even in your thoughts. You yourself have got sufficient proofs that their prowess is really wonderful."

CHAPTER XXVII

KISHKINDHYA

In the meantime, Lakshmana hearing everything from Angada, entered the city of Kishkindhya. Mighty Vanaras were stationed at the city-gate, and they stood up with joined palms at the sight of Lakshmana. Lakshmana was extremely angry and was breathing heavily. The Vanaras were greatly alarmed at that, and they dared not come near him.

Arriving at the gate, Lakshmana found the interior of the city highly picturesque, adorned with gems and rich with high palatial buildings and gardens, laden with fruits and flowers. Good-looking Vanaras, like the offspring of gods and Gandharvas capable of assuming different shapes at will, were strolling about, dressed in beautiful apparels and putting on beautiful garlands. The air was laden with the sweet fragrance of Sandal, Aguru and lotuses, and its high-ways were watered with sweet-scented water. Clear streams ran like silver threads. On his way, Lakshmana saw the excellent abodes of Angada, Mainda, Dvididha, Gavaya, Gavaksha, Sharabha, Bidyunmali, Sampati, Suryaksha, Hanuman, Viravahu, Suvahu, noble-minded Nala, Gumada, Sushena, Jamvuvan, Dadhivaktra, Neela, Sumitra and of other prominent Vanaras. Those houses were grey like clouds, adorned with garlands full of fragrance, stored with grains and inhabited by beautiful damsels. Lakshmana gradually passed by them and beheld Sugriva's palace. It was like the abode of Indra, the king of gods. Its beautiful walls were crystal rock,

and the top of the house was white as the summit of the Kailasa mountain. The Vanaras in arms were guarding its inaccessible gate provided with a golden arch. Various fruits and flower trees surrounded the palace and the ever-green Kalpa-tree of deep blue hue like that of a cloud, presented by Indra and always bearing fruit and flowers, spread its delightful shade.

Lakshmana then entered the palace as the sun enters a band of clouds. Lakshmana crossed seven rooms furnished with various seats, and various conveyances standing outside of them. He saw the well-guarded, spacious inner court of the palace where at various places stood golden and silver sets with excellent coverlets. Sweet music, correct in tune and measure, was being played in accompaniment of stringed instruments ; young damsels of noble birth, brilliantly attired, were busy in threading beautiful garlands. Sentries and servants stood at different places ; they had nice fineries about their dress, nor were they very busy with their work. Gradually Lakshmana entered the inner apartment.

In the meantime, the jingling sounds of anklets and zones were heard. At this, Lakshmana blushed in shame, and in great rage resounded the place with the twang of his bow. As it is not proper to enter a place inhabited by ladies, so Lakshmana stood there, but was deeply irritated at the neglect of Rama's work.

Sugriva stood up at the twanging sound of the bow and thought, "It is clear that Lakshmana, devoted to his brother, has arrived as reported by Angada," At this

thought, Sugriva's face grew dark and long, and he asked beautiful Tara, "My darling! Lakshmana by nature is gentle, but he has come fired with anger. What may be the cause of his wrath? Do you find any neglect of duty on my part? That hero never grows angry without any cause."

"Now tell me if you have noticed any dereliction of duty or misbehaviour towards him? Go and yourself see Lakshmana. Try to pacify him, his anger will vanish at your sight. Noble men are never rude to women. I shall see him after that lotus-eyed hero becomes pacified by your words." Thereupon the lovely Tara with intoxicated look, faltering gait and jingling zone, proceeded towards Lakshmana, stooping a little from the exuberance of her breast. Lakshmana felt nervous at her sight and casting aside his expression of wrath in the presence of a lady, he stood with a downcast look.

Tara was shameless under the influence of liquor and finding Lakshmana rather in a pleasing mood, she boldly began, showing her concern for Lakshmana :

"O prince! Why are you angry? Who has disobeyed your commands? Who has unwittingly entered into a forest-fire with dry fuels?"

Thereupon, Lakshmana showing a greater degree of amiability replied, "Tara! Your husband is under the sway of lust and has no religious insight. He has been indulging in sensual pleasures with his low followers, while we are sad with sorrow. He never thinks of us for the pride of his riches and kingdom. He promised to collect troops after the expiry of the rainy

season. Now time for that has arrived, but being addicted to pleasures under the influence of wine, he is quite ignorant of that. Drinking is not always proper. Under its influence people lose their piety and wealth, they forget their debts of gratitude, and quarrel breaks out even with the best of friends. He is the best friend who is gifted with righteousness and wealth, and your husband has renounced such a friend endowed with these two qualities. However, go and inform Sugriva of our present intentions."

Hearing those well-meaning words, Tara said about Rama's business, "O prince ! This is not the time for showing your wrath, nor is it proper to be angry with one's friends and relations. You should forgive him who has resolved to help you in your undertaking. It is not becoming of the noble to be angry with the low ; moreover, a virtuous soul like you should not yield to anger. I know why Rama is angry with us and the cause of delay. I am also aware of what is to be done at this moment. I am not even ignorant of the strength of carnal desires for which Sugriva is ever living in the company of women, neglecting all his duties. But I find you blind with rage, hence you cannot now feel the influence of love. Men swayed by lust lose their sense of righteousness, and of time and place, they never discriminate between right and wrong, O hero ! The chief of the Kapis, under the influence of lust, lives always close to me and he has lost all sense of shame. But he is a brother to you, please forgive him. Even saintly persons through ignorance fall victims to their

passions, whereas Sugriva is a fickle Vanara. Hence it is not to be wondered at all that he will be deeply engrossed in sensual pleasures."

Tara, after a pause, again began with bold, loving words, and with an intoxicated look, "O hero ! though the Vanara chief is under the influence of lust, yet he has issued orders beforehand for the collection of troops. Powerful Vanaras from different hills will come for your help. Come with me. Your character is pure, so it would not be sinful to see another's wife as a friend."

Thereupon, Lakshmana entered the inner compartment of the palace and found the bright-apparelled Sugriva seated on a golden seat, holding Ruma in deep embrace. He was adorned with jewels and ornaments and looked resplendent as Indra, the king of the gods, and was surrounded by beautiful damsels decked with excellent ornaments and garlands. At that sight the eyes of Lakshmana became red with anger.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LAKSHMANA PACIFIED

Lakshmana being extremely sorry for his brother's sufferings, burnt with rage like a kindling flame and breathed heavily. Sugriva was pained by that sight and stood up from his seat, like the decorated tall flagstaff of Indra. Ruma and other beautiful women also stood up as the stars rise after the moon. Sugriva's eyes were red with wine and he stood before Lakshmana like a Kalpa-tree with joined palms.

Lakshmana finding Sugriva in the company of women along with Ruma broke forth in anger, "O chief of the Kapis, that king who is noble, self-possessed, truthful and generous is adorable, but he who is addicted to vice, makes false promises to his friends, is cruel and villainous. You see, if one speaks falsehood for a single horse, then he becomes guilty of slaughter of hundred horses, and one who speaks falsehood for a single cow becomes guilty of the iniquity of slaughtering a thousand cows, and he who shrinks from fulfilling his promise commits the sin of suicide, and he becomes a hindrance to the salvation of his ancestors. That wicked fellow who after gaining his object neglects to perform his friend's work is ungrateful and is fit to be destroyed. Sugriva ! just listen what Lord Svayambhu has said about ingratitude. He has said that 'even those who slaughter cows, drink wine and break their vows may be saved, but there is no salvation for an ungrateful fellow.' O Vanara, you are neglecting Rama's work after first gaining your object, so you are a liar, ungrateful, non-Aryan and mean. Had you any mind to make any return for friendly services, then you would have certainly searched for Janaki. You are addicted to vulgar pleasures and false to your vows. Rama did not know before that, like a snake, you have dissimulated your character, as a snake conceals its dreadful nature by croaking like a frog.¹ You are a villain, noble Rama out of sheer generosity

¹ Perhaps to lure frogs to its fatal grip. It is, however, not a fact but a pure fiction.

has conferred upon you the Vanara kingdom. If you forget to render him service, you will without delay follow Vali. The path treated by Vali is not too narrow (to allow you to pass). Fulfil your vow and do not follow Vali. You have not as yet seen the thunderbolt-like shafts discharged from Rama's bow. This is why, being addicted to sensual pleasures you do not think of his affairs."

When Lakshmana was saying all this, flaring up with his energy, the beautiful Tara intervened in the meantime and said, "O hero ! Don't speak like this. The chief of the Kapis does not deserve harsh words, specially from your lips. He is neither cruel nor ungrateful, nor a liar, nor a cheat. He has not forgotten what great services have been rendered by Rama. It is on account of the generosity of that hero that he has obtained kingdom and fame and got Ruma and myself. But to tell the truth, Sugriva suffered for a long time and has recently got taste of pleasure. Therefore he could not attend to his duties in due time. You see saint Visvamitra being infatuated by the heavenly nymph Ghritachi regarded ten long years as one day ! When such a virtuous man can be indifferent to his duties, then what to speak of ordinary people ? O hero ! Sugriva is now under the spell of animal desires. He is quite fatigued and he has not yet been fully satiated. This is the reason of delay. Worthless persons get angry without enquiring into the cause of a thing. So don't be swayed by anger like a low-born man without knowing anything. I do now apologise for Sugriva.

Please forbear your wrath. Sugriva for Rama's well-being can give up kingdom, wealth, paddy, cattle and even Ruma and myself. He will restore Janaki to Rama's hand after slaying Ravana. In Lanka there are hundreds of millions of formidable Rakshasas. It will be difficult to slay Ravana without destroying them. Lord Vali knew the number of Ravana's army and this is what I had heard from him. However, Ravana is formidable, and Rama is helpless and it will be difficult for Rama to destroy Ravana unless he takes Sugriva's help. Now Sugriva has sent envoys in different directions to collect Vanara troops. Those Vanaras will help you. He cannot set out to Rama's work till their arrival. Owing to the excellent arrangement that have been made by Sugriva, all are expected to arrive, here even to-day. Millions of Bhallukas and Vanaras will go to you to-day. O hero ! Your eyes have become red with anger. Hence we cannot look at Sugriva's face, fearing that he may lose his life."

At this, Lakshmana was pacified by the reasonable speech of Tara. Thereupon, Sugriva cast off his fear as a piece of soiled cloth, and tore away the charming garland encircling his neck. His intoxication gradually subsided and he humbly submitted to the satisfaction of Lakshmana, "O hero ! I have got back my kingdom and reputation through the kindness of Rama. Rama is famous for his achievements in the world. It is impossible for me even to return one hundredth part of his kind services. Now, he will conquer by his own valour with my nominal help, and Janaki will soon be recovered.

What assistance needs he who can pierce seven palms, rocks and the nether region with one shaft, and at whose twanging of the bow the earth trembles with its hills and forests? When he will set out with his troops for the destruction of Ravana, I shall only follow his footsteps, O hero! I am your obedient servant. If I have committed any offence, please forgive me for love and confidence. You see a servant may transgress at every step."

Thereupon, Lakshmana replied with delight, "Sugriva, having got such a modest soul as you as his help, the worshipful Rama is really strong to-day. Your prowess is indeed wonderful and you are capable of controlling your senses. So you are worthy of enjoying the best things of the Vanara kingdom. Now, it is apparent that mighty Rama with your help will soon be able to destroy the wicked Ravana. The heroic Rama is truthful and virtuous, and what you have said about him is quite worthy of you. Except thyself and Rama who else can speak of his rival like this? In strength and valour you are like Rama. It is due to our good luck that we have got such a help after a long time. Now come with me to Rama. He has been much upset for Janaki's separation. Go and console him. He is deeply lamenting the loss of his darling, and it is for that, that I have spoken such hard things to you. Please excuse me."

CHAPTER XXIX

SUGRIVA'S DIRECTIONS

Then the lord of the Vanaras turned to Hanuman by his side and said, "Fetch the Vanaras that dwell in the Himalayas, Vindhya, Kailasa, Dhavalashekharā, Mandara, and Mahendra hills, on the other side of the sea, those who live in the west, and those who reside in the Udayagiri and the Astagiri, and those Vanaras having the strength of elephants and of collyrium-like hue, those who live in the Padmachala and Anjana hill, those who live in the Meru side, in the great caves, Dhumrachala, beautiful hermitages, fragrant woods, go and also soon fetch those Vanaras of golden hue that dwell in the Maharuna mountain, drinking Maireyā wine. Formerly, many swift envoys have been despatched for this. Ask those who are dilatory or addicted to pleasure to come soon. And those who will not arrive within ten days will be punished with death for violating royal commands. Let hundreds of Vanaras set out without delay. Let the space underneath the sky be covered with mighty Vanara hosts, like sable clouds. Let those who are adept in travelling, speedily collect all the Vanaras of the world."

Thereupon, Hanuman sent mighty Vanaras in different directions. Then, at once, the Vanaras flew through air,¹ and informed the Vanaras living in the hills, forests, on river bank, sea-shores, caves and other places. Vanaras living in distant quarters came flocking

¹ What does it mean? The original expression is *gaganachari*, i. e., one who moves in the sky.

in fear of Death-like Sugriva. Three million monkeys arrived from the Anjana hill, ten million from the Shitachala and hundreds of millions from the Kailasa mountain and those who lived in the Himalayas subsisting on fruit and roots arrived by thousands ; dreadful Vanaras of charcoal hue rushed from the Vindhya hill. Those who lived on the shore of the milky sea and in the Jamala woods and subsisted mainly on cocoanuts and those who took shelter in caves and rivers came, as if darkening the sky.

The envoys saw a famous tree in the Himalaya. Formerly, in that sacred hill sacrifice was celebrated for the satisfaction of gods. There they found delicious fruit and roots sprung from the stream of oblations offered in that sacrifice. The Vanaras—fond of fruits—for the gratification of Sugriva collected excellent fruits, roots, odourous and medicinal herbs.

After informing all the Vanaras and asking them to expedite, they came back to Kishkindhya. After presenting fruit and flowers to Sugriva they said, "O king ! We travelled through the hills, forests and rivers and informed all the Vanaras, and they will soon arrive." At this Sugriva was exceedingly pleased and he dismissed them after greeting the successful envoys.

After this, the brave Lakshmana, to Sugriva's delight said, "O chief of the Kapis, if you permit let us leave Kishkindhya."

Sugriva was exceedingly delighted at these sweet

words of Lakshmana. Let us go, your word is a mandate to me. Let us now depart."

Saying this he dismissed Tara and other women and called aloud his servants. Then those servants who were allowed to visit the inner compartments appeared before him with joined palms. Then Sugriva, of red hue, said, "My men! Soon fetch me a conveyance." Thereupon, the servants brought a conveyance, and Sugriva asked Lakshmana to get upon it.

After that, Sugriva with Lakshmana got into a glittering golden conveyance. A white umbrella spread over their heads, white yak-tails were waved and conch-shells and trumpets were blown and the minstrels sang their hymns of praise. Sugriva had ascended the throne, so he started with all the pomp of a king. A large number of proud and fierce Vanaras went with him, armed with various weapons.

At a short distance, stood the asylum of Rama. Sugriva along with Lakshmana got down from the conveyance and stood before Rama with joined palms. Other Vanaras humbly waited by the side of the lake, strewn with lotus buds.

Rama was greatly pleased seeing Sugriva and his Vanara hosts. Sugriva bowed down at Rama's feet. Rama raised him up and after embracing him with honour and deep regard said, "My friend! Take your seat." Sugriva then sat upon the ground. Thereupon Rama said "My friend, he is a king who in proper seasons follows righteousness, pleasure and wealth, dividing his time among them. And he who devotes himself to pleasure

renouncing what is good and righteousness, is like a man that falls asleep on the top of a tree and awakes when he falls down. That king is virtuous who is engaged in destroying his enemies and helping his friends and he attains his desired ends. Oh, hero ! The time has arrived for making preparations for war, so you should consult with your ministers."

Sugriva said, "My friend ! I have retrieved my kingdom and friends through your favour. He who receives a good office and does not requite it, is extremely vicious. Now, Vanaras have arrived from all the quarters of the world. The Golangulas and Bhallukas acquainted with forests and fortresses are waiting with their armies. Oh, hero ! The chiefs with their men will join you in the war and bring back Janaki." The virtuous Rama was greatly pleased seeing the warlike preparations of Sugriva, and in his delight he looked exceedingly beautiful, like a blue lotus, and embracing Sugriva repeatedly, Rama said, "There is nothing to wonder at that Indra will pour down rains, that the Sun will illumine darkness, that the moon will render the night bright with her rays,—rather it is their nature to do so ; so there is nothing strange that a virtuous friend like you will do what is agreeable to his friend. Now I find that you are really of sweet speech and with your help I shall be able to destroy Ravana with his brood. You are my friend and it is proper for you to help me now. In the days of yore, Anulada carried off Sachi, the daughter of proud Puloma, but Indra recovered Sachi by killing him. Thus the wicked Rakshasa has

carried away Janaki for his own death, and I shall soon recover her after his destruction."

Suddenly, the sky was covered with dust which screened the bright rays of the sun. Gradually, everything was enveloped in darkness and the earth with hills and forests began to shake. At a short distance, the Vanara army was seen proceeding from forests and hills, with a deep rumbling noise like that of thunder. The whole space seemed to have been covered with the Vanara hosts. These armies were endowed with great prowess and with sharp teeth. They were crimson in hue like the rising sun, white as the moon and yellow like the pollens of the lotus.¹

Nila, Gavaya, Darimukha, Aswikumar ; Maindya, Dvidida, Jamvana, Rumana, Gandhamadana, Angada, Indrajana, Rambha, Durmukha, Hanuman and others came with millions and millions² of Vanaras. Then Sharava, Kumuda, Vanhi and other heroes arrived. Some of them sat down, some of them frisked about, while others set up heroic yells.

They proceeded towards Sugriva like hosts of clouds and after greeting offered their services and they all stood with their joined palms.

Then Sugriva cognisant of kingly duties introduced³ the chiefs to Rama and then asked them to retire where they liked, and asked them who were versed in military arts to make a selection of the army.

1 The description appears to be quite perplexing.

2 There is no limit to hyperboles in ancient epics.

3 Quite a modern custom.

CHAPTER XXX

DIRECTIONS TO THE CHIEFS

Thus after being successful in collecting the army, Sugriva said to Rama, "My friend ! Those Vanaras, irresistible like Indra, who live within my jurisdiction, have arrived and are living in military barracks. They are formidable as giants and dreadful to look at, their prowess is well-known in the field of battle. They are very hardy and active, some of them reside in the hills, some of them in islands and some in forests. These Vanaras are your servants, are obedient to me and wellmeaning, and there are mighty forces under them. They will surely be able to achieve our object. What shall I say more, all those forces are at your command. Though I have not forgotten about the search for Janaki, yet you just order them to do as you like."

Then Rama embracing Sugriva said, "My friend ! Ascertain first whether Janaki is alive or not, and where Ravana lives. Find out his whereabouts. After that we shall do the needful. We shall not give any orders to the Vanaras. You are their master and the cause of this present undertaking ; so you yourself ask them to do what you think to be proper. O hero ! Nothing is unknown to you. You are wise and have knowledge of time and season for every thing. You are my friend, well-wisher and an object of absolute confidence."

After that, Sugriva addressing the mighty-voiced Vinata said, "O hero ! You are versed in morality,

sagacious in deciding course of duties and have knowledge of time and place. You take with you a thousand powerful Vanaras and set out for the east and search, and gather informations about Janaki and Ravana. You should search rivers like the Ganges, the Jamuna, the Sarayu, the Kaushaki, the Saraswati, the Sindhu, the Sona, the Mahi and the Kalamahi and search through the provinces of Kalinda Giri, Brama Mal, Videha, Malva, Kashi, Koshala, Magadha, Māhagram, Pundra, Anga, the land of silver mines. Search through islands, hills, and abodes on the summit of the Mandara Mountain. Also search through the houses in the Manadra inhabited by people having ears resembling cloths,¹ reaching their either lips and faces hard and black as iron. They are one-footed but quick in their movements. Also search for her among the descendants of those who are indestructible ; go among the carnivorous Rakshasas, good-looking hunters living in islands, and amongst them who have bristling hair, yellow complexion, and who live upon uncooked flesh. Search among those dreadful beings who have the form of a tiger and a man, who live inside water, those who swim like peaks, who sometimes trot like a horse, and who sometimes go about in crafts. Go to the Yava island divided into seven kingdoms and to the gold and silver islands. You will come across the Sisir mountain whose peaks kiss the heaven. The Gods and the Danavas always live there. Do you search for Sita in mountains and forests in these islands. Search for

1 Perhaps it means long ears in metaphor.

Janaki and Ravana in the beautiful places of pilgrimage, and romantic forests standing on the banks of the fastflowing Sona with red waters near the sea-shore, visited by the saints and Charanas. Search through mountain-caves, dreadful forests, gardens, islands and along the banks of rivers.

"After that, lies the terrible Ikshu ocean; there live huge Asuras hungry from a long time; they by the permission of Brahma feed upon creatures concealing themselves under the shadows. That ocean is dark as the clouds and roar with huge billows raised by the wind. Huge snakes are found in it. Somehow crossing that ocean arrive at the Red Sea. Its water is red and there stands a big Salmali tree and at a short distance from it is the jewelled house of Garuda, the king of birds¹. It was built with great care by the divine architect, Viswakarma. Here are hideous-looking Rakshasas called Mandeha, huge as mountain-peaks, and they hang with their heads downwards. Day after day they are scorched by the heat of the sun and fall into the sea being destroyed by the energy of Brahma, but they revive again, and again hang down on the cliffs.²

1. Certainly it can not literally mean birds. We think a race of people is meant as Birds.

2. It is difficult to decipher all these, perhaps it alludes to some natural phenomenon—probably to clouds resting on the hills. They rise from the sea by the sun's rays and then fall again into it as rains and this process is eternally repeated.

"Then lies the Kshiroda ocean, the ocean of milk. It is white like the autumnal clouds and the waves adorning its breasts are like a pearl-necklace. There stands a white cliff called the Rishabha in it, and in that there are various trees rich in blossoms, and there is a beautiful lake name Sudarsana. In that lake bloom silver-white lotuses with golden filaments. It is always visited by swans and gods, Yakshas, Charanas, Kinnaras, and nymphs for amorous sports.

"Then comes the dreadful Jalada ocean, where exists the mighty fire of Brahmarshi named Aurva in the form of the mouth of a horse. That fire at the end of a cycle of creation consumes the whole world with its movable and immovable things. All aquatic animals always shrink from fear at the sight of that dreadful fire,¹ and their cries are heard from a long distance. On the north coast of that Ocean there is a mountain with lustre of gold called Kanakashila. It extends to thirteen *Yojanas*. There you will come across Ananta, the upholder of the world, and who is worshipped by all the gods. His silver-white body is clad in blue apparel. He has a thousand heads and his eyes are expanded like the leaves of a lotus. There a golden palm tree with three ridges is seen on the peak standing on a *daïs*,—Indra reared it on the east.

"Then lies the golden Udaya hill, and a large number of cliffs kissing the sky have risen several leagues

1 Apparently it refers to the volcanic fire sometimes noticed in the sea.

from the ground. There are found golden Karnikara blossoms and bright Sals and palms. There is a golden cliff named Saumana six miles¹ in length and ten *Yojanas* in height. In the days of yore, Vishnu at the time of encompassing the three worlds with three paces² planted one foot on this mountain and his second foot on the Sumeru hill. In the golden age, the sun was seen in the Jamvudwipa when it ascended the hill through the north. Resplendent Rishis like Vaikhanaasha, Valakhilya and others live there. By its influence the creatures get light and sight of visible things. At a little distance from it is the Sudarshana island. Here every day the twilight of the evening grows crimson by the halo of the golden mountain and by the rays of the sun. The Udaya hill reveals the world and it is the gateway of the heaven. The sun rises in this quarter which is called the east. You should search the heart of this mountain, its caves, rills, forests and valleys for Janaki and Ravana. Beyond this no living creature can go. That space is covered with darkness, it is invisible and boundless, there only resides the presiding Deity of that quarter. We do not know anything existing beyond the Udaya hill. Now you shall search all the places, rivers and hills mentioned by me and also those that I have forgotten to mention. Search all possible places. Return after the expiry of a month or you will be punished with death. Go ye Vanaras ! Soon return after accomplishing the task."

1 6 miles make one Yojana.

2 This in fact refers to the three positions of the sun in the sky, in the morning, noon and in the evening.

CHAPTER XXXI

SUGRIVA'S DIRECTIONS

Then Sugriva despatched towards the south heroic Nila, Agniputra, Hanuman, Jamvuvan, the son of the Grandsire of creation, Suhotra, Sharasi, Sharagulma, Gaya, Gavaksha, Sharabha, Sushena, Brishabha, Maindya, Divilla, Gandhamadan, Ulkamukha, Ananga and made Angada and Brihadvaja their leaders. He then described to them various inaccessible places :

"You will first repair to the Vindhya Hills having hundreds of peaks, abounding in trees and shrubs and there you will find the Mahanadi full of snakes, the Godavari, the Narmada and the Krishnaveni. Then go to Mekhal, Utkal, Vidarbha, Matsya, Kalinga, Kausika, Ristika, Mahisak, Darsan, Avravanti and Avanti. Then search through the Dandaka forest—through its hills and caves. Afterwards go to Andhra, Pundra, Chola and Kerala province. You will find there the Malaya Hills, its peaks are beautiful and are tinged with minerals and there are excellent sandal woods, flowery trees, and the transparent Kaveri flows there. The nymphs always sport in its stream. You will meet there the sage Agastya ; greet him with your praise. Then with his permission cross the Tamraparni full of crocodiles and sharks. This stream being hidden in sandal woods flows towards the ocean, as a young beauty goes secretly to her lord.

"Then go to Province of Pandya. You will see there the golden city-gate worked with gems and pearls. Beyond Pandya lies the sea. Sage Agastya placed the

Mahendra Hill in its middle for crossing the waters. Mir Mountain is of gold and is very beautiful with flowers, creepers and trees. A portion of this hill is merged in this sea. Denizens of heaven, Nymphs, Yakshas, Siddhas and Charanas roam about there, even the king of gods, Indra, visits the spots.

"On the other side of the sea an island is seen. It extends to hundred *yojanas* and is lustrous like gold. Men cannot go there. That island is the abode of Indra—like Ravana. In that sea there lives a Rakshasi named Angaraka. She draws all creatures by her shadow and devours them. You search through the secret places of that island fearlessly.

"In the Southern ocean of hundred *yojanas* there is a mountain called Puspitaka; its lofty peaks kiss the sky and it is inhabited by the resplendent, Siddhas and Charanas.¹ Atheists, deceitful and ungrateful people cannot see the peak that is approached by the sun. Salute the mountain and search for Sita through its creek and corner. After that stands the Sun hill. It extends to fourteen *yojanas* and you cross that mountain by an arduous path. After it lies the Lighting hill. In that beautiful hill, trees and plants bear all sorts of flowers and fruits, and after partaking of their excellent fruits and after drinking delicious honey go to Kunjara hill, delightful to the mind and the eyes; there Viswakarma built the house for the sage Agastya. It is

1 They seem to be superhuman beings, but it is significant that they have been repeatedly mentioned in all ancient Sanskrit poems.

one *yojana* long and ten *yojanas* high and is made of gold and jewels. In that hill there is a city of the Pannagas called Bhagavati. It is always guarded by sharp-toothed, venomous snakes. Its highways are wide and in the city lives their king Vasuki. Enter that inaccessible spot and search through its hidden places". After that stands the Rishabha hill like a bull. It is full of gem and is exceedingly resplendent. In that hill excellent sandal wood known as Goshirsha, Padma and Harishyam is found. Don't ask any body anything about those sandals. The forest is guarded by a number of formidable Gandharvas called Rohita and there reside five Gandharva chiefs named Shailush, Gramone, Shikshan, Lhuka, and Babhru. The earth ends after that Rishabha Mountain and the region beyond it is inhabited by resplendent saints. O Kapi chiefs! After that lies the city of death. It is the dark and dreadful region of the manes of our ancestors. No living creature can go there. However, search for Sita in the places I have mentioned to you and also those places that you may come across in your journey. He who will be able to return within a month with the information that he has seen Janaki will be as rich as myself, and I shall consider him dearer to me than life, and he shall ever remain my friend though he may commit offence after offence. O Vanaras! The record of your valour is unbroken; you are born of noble families and have great accomplishments. So work now that you may secure information about princess Janaki."

1 These Puranic legendary Nagas and Pannagas (snakes) have been identified by the oriental scholars with the Non-Aryan primitive people of India who after the Aryan conquest took their shelter in mountain fortresses, caves and forests.

CHAPTER XXXII

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

Then Sugriva approached his father-in-law, Sushena, exceedingly strong and dark as a cloud. After bowing to him with joined palms he asked him to search for Janaki. Then turning to intelligent Archisman, Archmaya and Maricha, he said, "O Vanaras ! Follow Sushena with a hundred thousand Vanaras towards the west. Go to Saurashtra, Valhika, Chandra-Chitra, and other rich provinces. Visit large cities and hillsides abounding in Pannagas, Vakulas, Uddalakas and Utakas. crystal streams flowing to the west, forest, hermitages, deserts, hills and mountain fastness and search for Sita. At a short distance, you will come across the western ocean ever agitated by the whales, sharks, crocodiles and other sea-monsters. Your troops will rest under the shadow of Tamals, Ketakis and cocoanut trees. After that (you will meet) Murachipathan, Jatapur, Avanti, Angalepa, and the forest called Alakshita, and at a short distance from there you will find the junction of the Indus (Sindhu) and the sea. There is the wooded hill Chandragiri with a hundred peaks. In its tableland there is a class of birds known as the Sinhas. They pick up and carry to their nests whales, and elephants and roam about there with a deep rumbling noise. Search there the lofty peaks of the Chandragiri and the nests of the Sinha birds.

"In this ocean lies the Parijat mountain. Its golden cliffs are hundred *yojanas* high and there live twenty-four millions of fiery Gandharvas. Never go near them

and do not touch any fruits or roots there. Those vicious and dreadful Gandharvas always guard them. If you move about with apish cunning, you will have nothing to be afraid of.

"You will then meet the Vajra hill, hard as the thunderbolt. Its length and height are a hundred *yojanas* and it is covered with wonderful trees and creepers and its forest is blue like the *lapis lazuli*. Carefully look for Janaki through them.

"After crossing one-fourth of the sea you will come across another hill known as the Chakravana mountain. There Viswakarma constructed a wheel with a thousand spikes. Vishnu, the foremost of the male creation, procured from that place a conch and the wheel by slaying two demons named Panchjana and Hayagriva. The hill has spacious caves and beautiful peaks. Look for Janaki and Ravana there. After that stands the Varaha Mountain, which extends to sixty-four *yojanas*. There lies the city of Pragjyotish¹ and there lives a wicked Danava named Naraka. Then you will find the Sauvarna hill; fountains and rills flow through it; wild tigers, lions, elephants, bears roam about it. Another name of Sauvarna is Negha. Formerly, the gods on this hill invested the crown on Indra. Now Indra is its protector. Having passed by that mountain you will come across sixty thousand hill. They are of crimson hue like the rising sun and there you will find golden trees laden with fruits and flowers. Sumeru is the chief of these hills. Formerly, the sun-god being

1 Modern Assam.

pleased with Sumeru blessed it saying, "Sumeru ! Whatever thing might attach to you, by my grace will turn into gold, and those gods and the Gandharvas that take shelter in you will be of golden hue and devoted to me. On this hill in the evening Viswadeva, Vasus and Marutas worship the Sun when He goes down and becomes invisible. The distance between these two hills is ten thousand *yojanas*, but the sun covers that distance within half a minute.¹ On the summit of the Sumeru, there stands a beautiful white mansion of Varuna. Viswakarma has built it. There are many palaces and trees resounded by the wild notes of various kinds of birds. Behind that hill there stands a stately palm. It is of gold, adorned with ten crowns, and stands on a dais. In the Sumeru lives the virtuous saint Meru Savani, devoted to penance and meditation. He is effulgent like the sun and mighty as Brahma Bow down to him by touching the ground with your heads and enquire about Janaki. The sun goes down after travelling over the Sumeru. There is no place to go beyond the land of the sun set in a boundless space enveloped in eternal darkness. We don't know anything about it. Now, go as far as I have indicated to you. Return within a month, or you will be punished with death. Sushena will accompany you. Don't disobey his orders ; he is my father-in-law and an object of respect. You are intelligent ; still search the western region under his guidance. My object is to requite the services of Rama and I shall consider myself fortunate for it. Do what you think proper in this connection, considering time, place and other things and as situation may arise."

1. Light travels at the velocity of 1,86,000 miles per second.

CHAPTER XXXIII

DIRECTIONS ABOUT THE NORTH

Sugriva then turning to Shatavali said, "These Vanaras are the offspring of Yama. Take their counsel and being accompanied by other Vanaras like yourself, proceed towards the north adorned by the Himalayas. It is my wish to requite the good services of Rama and thus pay off the debt of obligation. His case is different. I shall consider myself fortunate even if I can help a man with whom I have not the least interest. O heroes! You always wish me good ; so devote yourself to Janaki's search. Rama is the adored object of everybody, besides he loves us greatly. So don't be indifferent about his work. Search through the hills and dales of the north by displaying your intelligence and valour. Go to the province of Prasthala, Bharata, Southern Kuru, Madraka and to the lands of the Mleccha, Pulinda Surasena, Kambhoja, Yavana and Barada. Having repaired to the Himalayas search for Janaki through the tracts of Lodhras,¹ Padmakas, and the pine forest.

"Next, you will come across Somasrama ; the Gods and the Gandharvas live there. At a short distance from it, you will find a lofty hill named Kala containing golden ores. Search its caves and tablelands for Janaki. After that rises the Sudarsana hill and after that stands the Devasakha hill. It is full of forests and wild birds, search its caves, hills and Kanchan woods.

¹ A kind of flower. A woman used to powder her face with its white pollens after bath, akin to the modern custom of powdering the face.

"After that, you will come across a vast barren tract of ground. It extends over two hundred yojanas in each direction. There is no mountain, river or trees, and no living creature is found there. Speedily cross that dreadful land. After crossing that dreary region go to the white Kailasa, where stands the magnificent palace of Kuvera, the lord of wealth. It is of yellow colour and ornamented with gold. It was built by Viswakarma. In that mountain there is a lake full of lotuses. The nymphs sport in its water and it is always visited by swans, ducks, and here Kuvera, adored by all, sports with the Guhyakas. Search through its tablelands and caves.

"After that comes the Krauncha hill, its caverns are quite inaccessible, enter them very carefully. Great saints, effulgent like the Sun, live there at the request of the gods. After that stands Manasa hill. Formerly God Ananga practised penance in this place. There is no vegetation there, even the gods and the Rakshasas cannot go there.

"After that is the Mainaka hill. There is a palace of Maya Danava. He himself built that palace. There are found women with horse-like faces straying about. After crossing that hill go to the Siddhasram, where live saints like Vaikhanasa and Valakhilya. They have got a tank full of golden lotuses, pink-coloured ducks sport there, and Kuvera's elephant named Sarvabhauma roam there with his mate. After this lies an extensive field. Neither the Sun, the Moon nor the clouds are seen there. Eternal silence reigns there. There saints,

holy as gods do rest. They have got shining bodies like the Sun, and that place is lighted by the effulgence of their bodies. After that flows the Sailoda river. Kichaka bamboos grow along its bank. The Siddhas cross the river by the help of those bamboos.

"After this lies Uttarakuru,¹ the land of the virtuous people. There are good many rivers and lakes. In those streams and lakes are found red lotuses of gold with leaves of blue gems. There are found pearls big as the Bimba fruit and precious jewels in plenty. Round about the place there are hills containing gems, and various kinds of trees. The scent, juice and touch of these trees are excellent. Fruit and flowers always grow there, and sweet-singing birds are found in woods; superb apparels,² excellent ornaments beset with pearls and *lapis lazuli* are capable of being worn by men and women alike; beds furnished with coverlets, beautiful garlands, palatable food, delicious drinks, beautiful and accomplished young damsels are to be found there. There are Siddhas, Gandharvas and Kinnaras. They are holy but are ever engaged in sporting with men. Sweet music and pleasant sound of laughter are always heard there. Every one is happy, and beautiful objects are always found there.

"After that lies the northern sea. The golden Somagiri is situated in that. Though the Sun does not

1 Perhaps somewhere in northern Asia—it has been mentioned in the *Aitareya Brahman*. Vide also B. G. Tilak's *Arctic Home in the Vedas*.

2 So Arran in his *Indica* writes that the India wool grows on trees; apparently he means cotton.

rise in that region, yet it is illumined by the Somagiri.¹ From that it appears that the land is devoid of the brilliancy of the sun. There resides Sambhu, the Soul of the universe and the chief of the gods, being surrounded by the Brahmarshis. He is Rudra, the lord of the universe. Don't attempt to go beyond Uttarakuru. Nobody can go there. It is inaccessible even to the gods. Return after seeing it from a distance. Beyond it lie infinite space and eternal darkness. We do not know anything about it. Vanaras ! Go to all places that have been described by me and also to other places which I have omitted to mention. Both myself and Rama will be greatly pleased if you can find out Sita. In short, I shall maintain you with your families with due honour. You too will be able to range about freely with your sweet hearts, being free from all troubles."

CHAPTER XXXIV

INSTRUCTIONS TO HANUMAN

Then Sugriva relying more upon Hanuman for the accomplishment of the difficult task, said, "O hero ! Your course is irresistible in heaven and earth, and through the sky. You know fully the regions of the Asuras, Gandharvas, Uragas, of gods and men. Your strength, fleetness and speed are like that of your father, the Wind god. Just think how Janaki can be found out. You are versed in polity and possess extraordinary intelligence, courage and strength. You can frame out a policy and have sense of time and place."

¹ Perhaps it refers to Aurora Borealis.

Then Rama thus reflected in his mind, "Sugriva thinks that Hanuman is capable of accomplishing the object, and it also seems to me that my end will be achieved through Hanuman. His valour and intelligence have been well tested. Sugriva considers him to be the best of the lot, so there is no doubt of success if he sets out in quest of Janaki."

Revolving these in mind, Rama seemed to be delighted in expectation of the attainment of his object, and handing over to Hanuman, for Janaki's confidence, a ring with his name engraved on it said, "O hero ! By this token, Janaki will be able to know that you have been sent by me and she will then meet you without any suspicion or fear. Considering your perseverance and valour I have not the least doubt of achieving my object."

Thereupon Hanuman took the ring with folded palms. He placed it on his head and bowed down to Rama. Being encircled by the Vanara hosts on all sides he appeared like the stainless Moon surrounded by the stars in the sky.

Then Rama said, "Son of Pavana ! You are a hero and powerful as the lion : I entirely depend upon you. Do as you can to find out Janaki."

After that Sugriva addressing the Vanaras said, "Go now, ye heroes, search for Janaki as indicated by me."

The Vanaras bowed down to his mandate and proceeded in different directions like locusts darkening the earth. Heroic Shatavali set out for the north crowned by the Himalayas ; Captain Vinata proceeded

towards the east ; Hanuman with Angada, Tara and others went to the south ; and Sushena towards the dreadful¹ west. Sugriva despatched each one to each direction according to his worth, and Rama waited in expectation of Sita in the Prasravana hill accompanied by Lakshmana.

Then the Vanaras quickly proceeded to their destinations. They filled the sky with their heroic noise, and each one of them said, "I shall rescue Janaki, destroying Ravana." Some one (boastingly) said, "Wait, I shall alone rescue trembling Sita from the nether region slaying Ravana." While another said, "I shall burn trees, pound rocks and dry up the ocean." Some said, "I shall jump a league." "I shall jump ten leagues," gave out another. "I shall jump ten thousand leagues," bragged the third. "I shall speed over the earth, since nothing can resist my way through hills, forests or the sea," said another.

Thus the Vanaras boasted exulting in heroic pride.

CHAPTER XXXV

RAMA'S QUERY

After the departure of the Vanaras in search for Sita, Rama asked Sugriva, "My friend ! How could you come to know every part of the globe ?"

¹ Maxmuller says that to the primitive people West was always associated with a feeling of horror. It was to them the region of darkness and Death, for the Sun sets in the West, and darkness always brings elements of fear with it.

Thereupon the modest Sugriva replied, "I shall tell you everything ; listen to it, friend !"

"Once upon a time Vali resolved to kill a Danava in shape of a buffalo named Dundubhi. That brute out of fear entered a cave of the Malaya hill, and Vali pursued him. At that time, I patiently waited for Vali at the mouth of the cave. Thus elapsed a long time. I was greatly astonished and sorry at this, and I inferred that my brother was dead. Then to shut Dundubhi I placed a piece of huge stone at the mouth of the cave; and returned to Kishkindhya, and began to live peacefully with my friends, Tara, Ruma and others. In the meantime Vali returned after slaying Dundubhi. I was greatly alarmed at this. I left the kingdom to him and, knowing that my brother wanted to kill me, I ran away with my friends. Vali gave me a hot pursuit.

"During my flight I have seen different countries, hills and forests. At that time the earth appeared to me (small) like the hoof-print¹ of a cow, moving like a fiery wheel, and for the distinct and clear view of everything it appeared like a mirror's polished face that reflects everything distinctly. First, I went towards the east, there I met various hills, forests and lakes. There I saw the Udayagiri, the haunt of the nymphs

¹ It indicates the ease with which Sugriva travelled over the earth. Mark also the expression, moving like a fiery wheel. It apparently refers to the revolution of the earth and also to its rotundity. The Hindus knew this long before other nations could dream of such scientific truths. Even the Greeks were ignorant of it.

and the Milky sea. Vali chased me there. Then I turned towards the south. There I met the Vindhya mountain and dense sandal woods where Vali remained concealed. Thence out of fear I went towards the west. There I saw different lands and the Astachala or the hill where the Sun sets. There too Vali pursued me and then I ran to the north and I travelled through the Himalayas and Sumeru and went up to the northern sea. But I could not find shelter anywhere.

"After that intelligent Hanuman said to me, 'Formerly, sage Matanga cursed Vali saying that if Vali would enter his hermitage, his head will be crushed into pieces.' O king ! I remember this, and think that the asylum of Matanga will be a safe place for us. Then I started for that hermitage and since then I have been living in the Rishyamuka hill. Vali could not enter Matanga's hermitage in fear of that curse. My friend ! Thus I have seen the whole of the world."

Hanuman with Tara and Angada after searching caves and forests full of ferocious animals reached the south-western peak. It was quite inaccessible on account of caves and forests. There Gaya, Gavaksha, Gavaya, Sharabha, Gandhamadan, Mainda, Dwivida, Jamvuvan and others began to search for Janaki at a short distance from one another. There was an open crevice named Riksha Villa. That was protected by the Danavas.

It was highly difficult to enter there. When the Vanaras oppressed with thirst and hunger searched for food and water they spied that cave. Swans, ducks, cranes and chakravakas were issuing from that cave

wet with water and tinged with lotus pollens. They were delighted at that sight, but found the cave to be quite inaccessible—a fit place for secret abode of the Danava king.

Then Hanuman addressing the Vanaras—the skilful rangers of forests—said, “You are tired of travelling through the rocky region, and are borne down with hunger and thirst. But, lo, swarms of ducks and cranes are emerging out of that cave drenched with water, and the leaves of the trees at the mouth of the cave are moist. It is clear that there is a lake or pool within. Let us now enter the cave.”

Then they entered the cave. It was a dreadful place covered with darkness. Wild animals were prowling about hither and thither. But nothing could thwart the vision or vigour of the Vanaras. They walked through darkness in great speed by taking hold of each other. Thus they passed a Yojana, but every one became oppressed with severe thirst and hunger ; everybody's face grew thin and dark, and they despaired of their lives ; at that time suddenly light burst on their view, and they entered a forest, where there was not even a tinge of darkness, and where golden trees shone like columns of fire ! Sal, Tal, Tamala, Punnaga, Vanjula.

Then the Vanaras entered a deep forest and there they met a dreadful Asura. At the sight of the Asura, the Vanaras tightened their loin-cloths and when the Asura challenged them, Angada inflamed with rage for the Danava's destruction struck him with his fist and

the Asura breathed his last vomiting blood. Then the Vanaras elated with victory searched every cave carefully till at last they got tired and took their rest under the trees.

At this, the wise Angada in his exhausted voice encouraged the Vanaras saying, "O Vanaras! We have searched hills, dales, forests and caves, but nowhere could we find Janaki, nor that wicked rover of the night who has carried away Janaki. But the appointed time is about to be over. Stern is Sugriva's command. Let us search for Janaki without minding any suffering or pain. We ought to banish our idleness, sleep and all feelings of pain. Courage and skill are the keynotes of success. We shall certainly reap the fruits of our perseverance and labour. Don't despair, screw up your courage. Sugriva is haughty and he rules with an iron hand and I, therefore, advise this for your welfare. Tell me whether my words are reasonable or not."

Then Gandhamadana, fatigued and oppressed with thirst, with a weak voice added, "You see what the crown-prince had said is well-meaning and sound. Let us again search for Sita in mountain fortresses, hill-forts, forests and rills."

Thereupon, the Vanaras stood up and ascended the silver-mountain looking like a mass of autumnal clouds, and searched for Janaki through the beautiful Lodhra groves and Saptaparna woods. But constant moving about told upon their body and mind, and they again sat down for rest. After removing their fatigue, they again got upon the Vindhya hills and resumed their search.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HANUMAN'S SEARCH

In the meantime the Vanaras were proceeding in utmost speed in quest of Janaki and they searched different countries, hills, forests, lakes and streams.

They travelled during the day, and at night rested in places abounding in fruits and flowers.

Thus nearly a month from the date of their departure was completed. Then the Vanaras gave up the quest in despair and began to return. War-like Vinata with his colleagues came back from the east ; Shatavali from the west ; and Sushena with his hosts from the south. Sugriva was by the side of Rama in the Prasravana hill. They came to him and after due greetings said, "O king ! We have searched thoroughly hills, dales, dense forests, groves, cities, provinces, islands and many inaccessible places, yet could not find any trace of Janaki. Hanuman has proceeded towards the southern direction. Wonderful is his valour and we doubt not that he will succeed in ascertaining the whereabouts of Janaki."

In the meantime Hanuman with Angada and Tara was journeying through the south. He arrived at the Vindhya hills in company of other Vanaras and searched its forests, caves and valleys, but could not find Janaki anywhere. Gradually they entered into more and more dense forests and then arrived at a place where the trees were destitute of fruits and flowers, where the streams were dry, and where there was no lotus, where roots were scarce, and where no animal or plant could

be found. Formerly a sage named Kandu lived there. He was truthful, austere and full of anger. Kandu had a son of ten. That boy died in that forest; at that Kandu flew into a rage and cursed the forest. Since then the place had become dreary like that. The Vanaras searched that place too. But nowhere they found any trace of Sita or of Ravana.

Dhava, Champaka, Naga and flowery Karnika stood there with their red leaves, golden bunches, and summits covered with creepers. Those trees were shining like the newly risen sun and had platforms of *lapis lazuli* round their bright trunks. Somewhere stood flowery creepers of the deep blue, full of bees, somewhere stood crystal lakes full of golden fishes and excellent lotuses. At some places stood seven-storied buildings worked with gold¹, silver and *lapis lazuli* with balconies of gold covered with screens of pearls. At some places, trees of coral hue were bent down with the weight of fruit and flowers with golden bees (hovering on them). The Vanaras saw there beds and seats worked with gold and gems, vessels of gold, silver and bed-metal and at another place, heaps of Aguru, Sandal flowers, variegated blankets, excellent clothes, delicious wines, palatable fruits and costly conveyances.

Then they met an ascetic woman at some distance. She was clad in a black deer skin and was of spare diet. She was glowing with her own energy like fire. The

1 In the original it means building made of gold and silver ornamented with *lapis lazuli*.

Vanaras were greatly astonished at her sight, and stood round.

Then Hanuman interrogated her with folded palms, "Tell me, O nun ! Who art thou and to whom belong this place, these houses and jewels ?"

CHAPTER XXXVII

NUN SWAYAMPBABHA

Hanuman again said, "Being oppressed with thirst and hunger we have entered this place. Everything is wonderful here, and we have been greatly astonished. In a word, we have been both frightened and bewildered. To whom do these gold and silver palaces with golden windows covered with nets of pearls belong ? To whom do these golden trees, delicious food, golden loruses, fishes and tortoises belong ? Are these the products of your ascetism, or of that of another ? In fact, we do not know anything about it. Just narrate everything.

Then the nun replied, "My boy ! Formerly, there lived a Danava named Maya. He is known as Viswakarma amongst the Danavas. This Maya propitiated Brahma, Lord of the creation, by his penances, and through the blessings of Brahma he learnt the science of mechanics. He has built these beautiful palaces of gold and silver."

"After that, the Danava King, Maya, began to live here enjoying all these luxuries and wealth. At that time he became attached to a nymph named Hema.

Thereupon the king of gods, Indra, destroyed him by thunder. Later on, Brahma bestowed all these upon Hema. I am Meru-Savarni's daughter, my name is Swayamprabha. Hema is my dear mate. She is skilful in music and dancing. I am protecting all these things for her. Now tell me why have you come to this dense forest? How could you come to know of this place? I am offering you palatable fruits and roots, and delicious drinks. Just remove your fatigue and after that narrate to me everything."

The ascetic woman again said, "If your fatigue has been removed after refreshment, tell me everything."

Then Hanuman replied without any reserve, "O nun! King Dasaratha's son, Rama, has come to the Dandaka forest with his brother Lakshmana and his wife, Sita. He is the lord of all, and mighty as Indra and Varuna. Wicked Ravana has carried off his wife from Janasthana. Sugriva, the king of Kapis, is his dear friend. He has asked us to search for Sita and Ravana, and at his command we are proceeding towards the south. O worshipful lady, we have searched everything here, but could not find Janaki.

"When we were stricken with thirst and hunger and were at a loss to decide our course of action, we suddenly spied this cave, enveloped in darkness. I asked the Vanaras to enter as I inferred the existence of some lake in the locality. This is why we have come here. We are almost dead with hunger and thirst, and you have saved us by your generous offer. Now tell me what we can do in return."

Thereupon, Swayamprabha said, "I have been much pleased with your words. It is my duty to do all this, except that I have nothing else to crave for."

At this, Hanuman replied, "O pious lady ! We now ask for your protection. Sugriva has fixed one month's time for searching for Janaki, but that period has expired. Now come to our rescue. We have been greatly frightened for our violating Sugriva's mandate. O honourable lady ! Of highly responsible duty has been entrusted to us, but everything will be frustrated if we remain confined here"

Then the ascetic woman replied, "You see, one who enters here cannot escape with his life. I shall, however, save you by virtue of my spiritual powers ; just close your eyes or it will be difficult to succeed."

Thereupon, the Vanaras in expectation of their exit, cheerfully closed their eyes with their beautiful fingers. Then the nun got them out of the cave in a moment and assuring them said, "There stands the fair Vindhya mountain, there is the Prasravana hill, and there lies the deep at a short distance. May good happen to you. Let me now depart."

Saying this Swaymaprabha re-entered the cave.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ANGADA'S DESPAIR

When Vanaras came out, they saw the shoreless cean rolling before them with its thundering waves.

A month had already expired in exploring the

regions of Maya, and now arriving at the foot of the Vindhya they began to cogitate. In the meantime the spring appeared and the trees bowed down with flowers and became covered with creepers. They were greatly alarmed at this.

Then the Crown-prince Angada respectfully addressing the elderly Vanaras gently said, "Hear me, Vanaras, we have set out at the command of Sugriva, but we have been delayed by entering this cave. We set out with the understanding that we would finish the search within Karttika but that appointed period has expired. Now decide what to do. You are versed in polity, you are skilful, war-like and famous. You have set out with me at Sugriva's command, but if you return being unsuccessful you will surely meet with death. Who can be happy by violating the commandment of the Vanara chief ? Since the appointed period is over, we should starve ourselves to death.

"Sugriva is stern by nature. He is our master and he won't forgive us for our fault. He will certainly punish us for failing to find out Sita. So let us starve ourselves to death renouncing our home, family and wealth. The king will punish us severely if we return. So it is better to die here. You see, Sugriva himself has not appointed me as heir-apparent to the throne, but Rama, Sugriva bears me grudge from before, so he will punish me severely for this transgression. Why should my friends and relations find me in distress ? I should rather starve myself to death on this sacred shore of the sea."

The Vanaras at this sorrowfully remarked, "Sugriva is haughty and Rama is a hen-pecked husband. The appointed time is over, and if we now return without any information of Janaki, Sugriva will kill us for the satisfaction of Rama. One must not return to his master after committing an offence. We are chief amongst Sugriva's attendants. Either we should return with information of Janaki, or we should die in this place."

Then heroic Tara finding the Vanaras thus panic-stricken said, "O Kapis! Don't be cast down with melancholy thoughts. If all of you approve, we may live in this cave. This has been built by the art of Maya and it is inaccessible and there is also plenty of meat and drink. Besides there is no scarcity of flowers and water here. If we live here, we shall have no occasion to fear either Indra, Rama, Sugriva or anybody else."

The Vanaras were pleased at these words, and they said in delight, "So improvise some means with undivided attention so that we may escape the penalty of death."

Angada had clear intelligence.¹ He was an adept in polity² and possessed many rare virtues.³ He listen-

1 Capacity for devotion, listening, or power of appreciation, attending, retaining, debating, discussing, understanding of meaning and of truth are the right adjuncts of a clear intelligence.

2 Equity, Charity, Division and Punishment.

3 Knowledge of time and place, firmness, power of endurance, omniscience, skill in secret counsels, harmlessness, spiritendness, heroism, faith, gratitude, protection

ed to Tara's advice as Indra did attentively listen to the words of Sukracharya, the preceptor of the Daityas. His valour and courage were bright like the effulgence of the full moon. He was greatly fatigued in carrying out the behest of Sugriva. Then Hanuman well-versed in all the branches of learning, understood from his behaviour that the vast Vanara kingdom was not in his luck. He attempted to change his mind and to create difference of opinion amongst the Vanaras.

Then Hanuman frightening Angada with alarming words began, "O prince ! You are more skilful in war than Vali, and you are capable of bearing the burden of the vast Vanara kingdom like him. But the Vanaras are naturally a fickle race, and living here without their wives and children they will never carry out your words. And I say it openly that you will not succeed even by your policy of divide and rule, to draw Jamvuvan, Neela, Suhotra and myself from Sugriva's side. The weak may live by incurring hostility of the strong, but self-defence is indispensable for the weak. Great mischief will ensue from this quarrel. You think this cave safe from Tara's words, but it will be an easy thing for Lakshmana to penetrate into it. Formerly, little injury was done to this cave by Indra's thunder-bolt but Lakshmana will break it down easily like the

of the refugee who has taken shelter, non-anger and restlessness are the fourteen virtues. All the above have been alluded to in the original that speaks of eight kinds of intelligence, four kinds of polity and fourteen virtues which Angada possessed.

stalk of a leaf with his keen arrows, which rive cliffs like a thunder-bolt. O hero ! As soon as you will put up here, the Vanaras will leave you. They will never comply with your request, suffering from hunger rolling in miseries and anxious for their wives and children. At that moment you will be bereft of your friends and well-wishers, and then you will start with fear even at the rustling of a blade of grass. But if with humility you approach Sugriva with us, he will confer on you the kingdom for your being the next heir.

"Sugriva is truthful, pious and pure, and he bears you a great affection ; so he won't put you to death. The chief of the Kapis ever loves your mother most ardently · in short, as if he bears his life just to please her, and your mother too has no other issue. Angada, so let us return home "

Hearing Hanuman's submissive speech that was reasonable and that evinced great devotion towards the master, Angada replied, "O hero ! Sugriva has not got any patience, purity, sincerity or generosity. These virtues do not exist in him. He who takes the wife of his elder brother, a mother unto him, is indeed, a hateful creature. Vali posted this wicked fellow as a guard. but this villain came back stopping the tunnel with a rock. How can you call him virtuous ? He is certainly extremely ungrateful who could even forget Rama with whom he had contracted friendship for his own good. Fear of sin is a different thing ; he has despatched us simply out of his fear of Lakshmana. Sugriva is ungrateful, vicious and fickle. He has violated the sacred

injunctions of Shastras, and none of his relations will believe him. Be he virtuous or not, I am the son of his enemy and surely he will not spare my life. All these will be disclosed to him. I am helpless and weak, how can I then return to Kishkindhya and live there as destitute ? That cruel fellow will surely get rid of me as a thorn by the side of his throne, either by hanging or by solitary confinement. So death from starvation is preferable to me. O Vanaras ! Give me your leave and go back. I swear, I shall never return to Kishkindhya. You convey my respectful greetings to King Sugriva, the heroic Rama and Lakshmana and to the worshipful Ruma. Mother Tara is naturally attached to her son ; she will surely die, if she hears the news of my death. Just console her with proper words."

Saying this, Angada greeted the aged Vanaras with tearful eyes and stretched himself on the grass. Thereupon, the Vanaras burst into tears and they began to praise Vali and Angada and to speak ill of Sugriva.

They too then decided to starve themselves to death and after their ablutions they sat round Angada facing the east. At that time, following the example of Angada, each one prayed for death, while talking amongst themselves about Rama's exile, Dasaratha's death, conquest of Janasthana, abduction of Sita, death of Jatayu, destruction of Vali and Rama's anger from the beginning. At that time, the noise of the mighty Vanaras like the deep roaring of the sea drowned the gentle murmuring of the mountain rill.

CHAPTER XXXIX

SAMPATI

The long-lived Sampati lived in that Vindhya mountain. He was the brother of Jatayu and his valour was known to all. He emerged from his cave and finding the Vanaras resolved to die, said, "In this world everything happens according to the acts done in one's prior birth. After a long time my food has appeared before me ! I shall eat these Vanaras one after another, after they give up their ghosts."

Angada was much grieved hearing these words of the greedy Vulture, and addressing Hanuman said, "Look ! Death itself has come for the Vanaras in the guise of a bird ! Now, we could not execute the royal command, nor could achieve Rama's work. Look, danger is ahead, you have all heard what Jatayu did for Janaki. Every living being, even beast and birds of the forest, is doing its utmost for Rama. We too shall give up our lives for him. We have exhausted ourselves, but could not find Janaki as yet. Jatayu is happy, for he died in fighting, and thus was saved from Sugriva's hand. What incalculable mischief has been done by King Dasaratha by granting Kaikeyi's prayers. Consequently Rama was exiled into the forest with Lakshmana and Sita. Vali was slain and ultimately the Rakshasas will be destroyed."

Hearing these painful words, the sharp-beaked Sampati sorrowfully said, "Who is it that has struck my heart by the news of dear Jatayu's death ? I hear his name after a very long time. I feel gratified hearing about the

virtue of my younger brother. O Kapis! Tell me how Jatayu met with his end, how he contracted friendship with death? My wings have been scorched by the rays of the sun. I wish you to take me down from the mountain." The Vanaras were afraid of Sampati, so they could not confide in his words though his voice was faltering in grief. They anticipated some cruel mischief from the moment they sighted him. They said among themselves, 'We are now fasting; if the vulture eats us, our wish will be fulfilled.'

At last, Angada having brought down Sampati from the peak said, "O bird! Mighty Riksharaj was my grandfather. He had two sons, the pious Vali and Sugriva. I am Vali's son. Vali's heroic deeds are known to all. Now, lord of the earth, the heroic Ikshwaku prince Rama, along with his brother Lakshmana and wife Janaki has come to the Dandaka forest at the behest of his father. Ravana has carried off his wife from Janasthana. Jatayu, who was friend to Rama's father, witnessed this, broke Ravana's chariot and brought down Sita. Jatayu was old and was borne down with fatigue, so mighty Ravana killed him easily. Rama cremated Jatayu and thus he has attained heavenly bliss.

"Rama then contracted friendship with my uncle Sugriva and has conferred the kingdom on Sugriva after slaying Vali. We have been engaged by Sugriva. We have searched through different parts of Dandaka, but could not find out Janaki, as one does not find the glow of the sun at night. We then unwittingly entered the spacious tunnel made by Maya. Our appointed time

has expired within that tunnel. We are Sugriva's servants. Finding that the allotted time is over we are starving ourselves to death out of Sugriva's fear. Where shall we be safe after provoking the wrath of Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva?"

Then Sampati replied with tears, "The one about whose death at the hands of Ravana you have just now spoken was my younger brother, Jatayu. I have grown old and lost my wings, so I have patiently borne the news of my brother's death. To speak the truth, I have not strength enough to retaliate my brother's death. Formerly, myself and Jatayu went to heaven soaring through the sky to conquer Indra after his victory over Vritrasura. When we approached the sun, Jatayu was unnerved by the intense heat of the sun, and I, from brotherly love, protected him under the shadow of my wings. My wings were burnt and I dropped down upon the Vindhya. Since then I have been living here, and have not heard anything about Jatayu till now."

Then Angada said, "O king of the birds! If Jatayu be your brother and if you have heard all and if Ravana's residence is not unknown to you, then tell me where does that cunning Rakshasa live, whether near or far off?"

Then Sampati, to the delight of the Vanaras, said, "You see, I have grown old and have lost my wings, still I shall help Rama with my words. The heaven, the earth and the nether region are not unknown to me. I know of the war between the gods and the Asuras and

also of the churning of the Ocean. I am infirm with age or I would have done service to Rama. O Vanaras! I have once seen wicked Ravana carrying a beautiful young damsel. That woman was trembling and weeping by taking the names of Rama and Lakshmana and throwing down her ornaments one by one. She looked like the dawn glittering over the mountain peak! Her yellow robe against the dark body of Ravana shone like lightning under the sky. She was uttering Rama's name. Now I infer her to be Sita.

"The island of Lanka is the place of residence of that villain. He is the son of Viswasrava and brother of Kuvera. An island will be seen about a hundred Yojanas across the sea. The heavenly mechanic Visvakarma hath built his palace. Its gates and diases are made of gold, and the palace and its walls are of red hue. Sita is now confined there. She is guarded by Rakshasa women. You will find her on going there. Lanka is girt by the sea on all sides. Now, cross the ocean without delay. I predict through my intuition that you will come across Lanka. Journey along the sky firstly belongs to the pigeons and the Finga birds; secondly, to the parrots and crows; thirdly, to the Bhasas, Kuvaras and Kraunchas; fourthly, to the hawks; fifthly, to the vultures; sixthly, to the proud ducks and then to the sons of Vinata. We are descended from the son of Vinata. We possess extraordinary powers. However, Ravana has committed a wicked deed, and what I tell you would come to pass. I have got supernatural vision on account of the Sauparna' powers, and I can see

Ravana and Sita from here. We are naturally endowed with a long sight. Now devise some means to cross the ocean and take me to the sea shore. I shall perform watery rites for Jatayu."

The Vanaras were mightily pleased at this news of Janaki. They took Sampati to the beach and then brought him back to the Vindhya hill. Vanaras made great noise in delight. Then Jamvuvan rising from the dust asked, "O king of the birds! Just tell us everything about Janaki and save the Vanaras."

Then Sampati finding the Vanaras ready to break their fast and eager to know about Janaki said, "O Vanaras! I shall tell you how I came to know about the abduction of Sita, and from whom; I have been living in this hill from a long time and have grown old. I have got a son named Suparshwa. He feeds me in due time. Lasciviousness of the Gandharvas, anger of the serpents, timidity of the deer and our hunger are most prominent.

Once Suparshwa went out in the morning in quest of food, but came back without anything in the evening. I was restless with hunger and told him many hard things. Then to pacify me, Suparshwa, said, "O father! To-day in due time I soared into the sky for food and waited by obstructing the passage of the Mahendra hill. Various sea-animals were passing through it. There I saw a dark man of collyrium hue carrying away a damsel, glittering as the resplendent dawn. I thought to capture the both for meal. But that man approached me and with great entreaties begged for passage. Not

to speak of me, even the lowest of creatures forgives him who asks for protection. I gave him passage and in great speed he hied along the sky. Then the Siddhas and other rangers of the sky appeared and congratulated me on my good luck that I was alive. On enquiry, I learnt that the man was Ravana, the Rakshasa chief, and the woman was Rama's wife Janaki. She was crying in distress. This is why I am late. O Vanaras ! I did not want to display my valour even hearing this from Suparshwa. How could I without wings ? I have only power of speech and intelligence, and I shall achieve my end by these with the help of your valour. You are unconquerable even by the gods. You have come a long distance at the command of Sugriva. Now get yourselves ready for performing the real work of Rama. Don't delay, nor be indifferent."

CHAPTER XL

NISHAKARA'S PROPHECY

When Sampati after bath and Tarpana was seated, surrounded by the Vanaras, he suddenly remembered an incident and began to narrate in delight, "Hear me, O Vanaras ! How I came to know of Janaki." Formerly being scorched by the sun I fell down unconscious and I regained my consciousness after six days. I looked around to ascertain the place where I fell and seeing rivers, lakes, hills and the sea I ascertained that I fell on the Vindhya hill, on the shore of the southern sea.¹ On the hill formerly stood a sacred asylum. I lived

1 It can't be the present Vindhya mountain.

there for eight thousand years, even after whose death. Somehow I got down from the hill and with very great difficulty reached the ground, strewn with Kusha grass. At that time I felt a great desire to see sage Nishakara, and with great difficulty I reached his hermitage. Formerly, I had been many a time there with Jatayu to worship the saint's feet. When I reached there, a gentle breeze was blowing shaking the trees of the hermitage laden with flowers and fruits. I waited for the sage under the shadow of a tree. After a while, I found the resplendent sage coming facing the north, after a dip in the sea. As supplicants surround a man of charity, so he was surrounded by lions, tigers, bears, reptiles and Srimaras. Nishakara then arrived at the hermitage and as ministers and soldiers go back when the king enters his room, so those wild animals at once retired. Then I saw that gentle sage. He was greatly delighted at my sight and after entering his hermitage he immediately came out again and said, 'O Bird, I cannot recognise you properly at first since your wings have been burnt and your feathers have undergone a change. I knew two birds of great speed, they were the kings of birds. Of that two you seem to be Sampati and your younger brother I think, is Jatayu. You always came here in human form to greet me. Now tell me why you have been thus punished, and how your wings have been scorched.'

"Then I replied to the sage, 'My Lord ! I have sores all over my body. I feel ashamed and I am greatly fatigued too. It is not possible to speak everything now.

Hear me, however. Formerly, myself and Jatayu soared up in pride to conquer Indra in heaven. When the forest appeared like grass, the rivers like threads, and mighty mountains like the Himalayas, the Vindhya and the Meru like an elephant immersed in a pond, we were dazed by the glare of the sun. We lost our way. With very great difficulty we bowed to the Sun. The sun is large like the earth. As soon as Jatayu looked at the glowing disc he fell down even before he could speak to me. Instantly, I descended and protected him with my wings. Then Jatayu was saved from the intense heat of the sun, but my wings were burnt. I fell down like an inert mass on the Vindhya hill and Jatayu, I presume, on Janasthan. O sage ! I have lost my kingdom and my brother, so I have come to cast off my life here by throwing myself from the hill.'

"Saying this, O Vanaras ! I began to cry in grief. Then the sage after a moment's reflection said, 'Both wings and feathers will again grow, you will regain your power of vision and bodily strength. I have heard of it and have also come to know of it from my yogic powers, that a great thing will happen in future. In the line of the Ikshwaku, a son name Rama will be born to king Dasaratha. That truthful hero by the mandate of his father will be exiled into forest with his brother Lakshmana. Ravana, the unconquerable Rakshasa chief, will carry off his wife from Janasthan and hold out various sorts of temptations before her, but that famous lady will ever fast for her deep sorrows. Indra coming to know of this will send her heavenly food. Knowing

that it has been sent by Indra she will partake of a little from it and will drop the rest on the ground saying that whether her husband and his brother are alive or not this food is meant for them. Subsequently, the Vanara emissaries of Rama will arrive here and, O thou foremost among birds, thou shouldst give them information about Janaki. So do not leave this place at any time. More over, where will you go in your present state? Wait, your wings will surely grow on you. I could have restored them even this day, but since by staying here you will be able to do good to the Brahmanas, saints, Indra, preceptors and to the people at large I refrain from doing it.

"O Vanaras, saying this the sage Nishakara entered his hermitage. Now, I wish to see Rama and Lakshmana. I have no desire to live long, but to breathe my last after seeing them once.

"O Vanaras! I was thus waiting for you. To speak the truth, eight thousand years have elapsed since I have been waiting for this opportunity. After the sage repaired to heaven doubts filled my heart. I greatly despaired on account of my unfavourable circumstances and sometimes even thought of putting an end to my life. But the sage's counsel to keep up my life sustained me and has dispelled my sorrows, as a lamp dispels the darkness of night. I know about the prowess of Ravana and I took my son Suparshwa to task for not rescuing Janaki at that time.¹ I have heard from the Siddhas

¹ An unnecessary repetition, all these useless diffusions are interpolations of a later age by minor poets. Translator

that Rama and Lakshmana have lost Janaki and I have myself seen Janaki crying when being carried away. But my son did not do what was his duty to do towards the sons of Dasaratha."

When Sampati was narrating these things to the Vanaras, wings grew on him. Finding him thus fledged with red feather, he became extremely delighted and addressing the Vanaras said, "O Vanaras, just see, by the blessing of the sage I have got back my feathers and I feel myself as strong as I was in my youthful days. Persist in your endeavours, you will surely find Sita. The growth of my wings presages success."

Saying this the king of the birds soared into the sky just to try the strength of his wings.

The Vanaras were extremely delighted at these words of Sampati, and they swiftly proceeded in quest of Janaki towards the south where resided the hero to be conquered.

CHAPTER XLI

ANGADA'S COUNSEL

The Vanaras shortly reached the sea. They found the sky with its stars and planets mirrored on its surface. They took their quarters on its north. They beheld the ocean boundless as the sky; at one place it was agitated by mountainous billows, at another place it seemed to be gently swimming while in another place it appeared to be asleep. They stood stupefied at the sight of the mighty ocean.

Then Angada encouraged them saying, "O Kapis ! Don't be depressed. Sadness is miserable. As an infuriated snake destroys a child, so grief destroys everything in life. He who becomes dejected with grief at the time when he should give proof of his valour, his manliness vanishes."

Next day, Angada held consultations with the eldest Vanaras about the means of crossing the ocean. He was then surrounded by the Vanara hosts, and none but Angada and Hanuman could keep them silent. Angada then greeting everybody, with due honour, said, "Soldiers, and the aged Vanaras ! Tell who amongst you will cross this ocean extending over hundred yojanas ? Who will fulfil Sugriva's pledge ? Who will deliver us from fear ? For whose service we shall again meet our wives and children and shall be able to return to Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva in cheerful minds ? If any amongst you can cross the ocean, he should immediately come forward and give us his assurance."

The Vanaras remained silent at these words of Angada and the whole host stood motionless as inert objects. Angada at this resumed, "You are born of noble families, you are honourable and heroic. Nothing can thwart your course. Now tell me who can cross the sea."

Hearing Angada's speech the foremost of the Vanaras began to speak about personal capacities. Gaya said, "I can travel ten yojanas." Gavaksha said, "I can

leap¹ twenty yojanas." Sharva said, "Thirty yojanas are enough for me." Rishabha said, "I can cover forty yojanas at ease." Yojanadi said, "I can venture up to seventy yojanas," and Sushena gave out that he could up to eighty yojanas.

Then old Jambuvan addressing all respectfully submitted, "Formerly we could travel a good deal, but now we have grown old. Still I shan't be able to neglect my present duties. Even now I can cover ninety yojanas, but don't fancy that is my utmost limit. In the days of yore, at the sacrifice of Vali, Lord Vishnu covered the three worlds. I circumambulated him at that time. But now I have grown old. I had great strength in my youth, but at present I can proceed up to that distance but that will not serve our end."

Then the wise Angada after showing proper respect to Jambuvan said, "O hero, I can cross this hundred yojanas, but I doubt very much whether I shall be able to return or not."

Then Jambuvan said, "O prince! We know that you have extraordinary power of locomotion. You can easily go hundreds and thousands of yojanas, but it is not proper for you to go personally. It is the master that should give orders, but who can command the

1 There is considerable doubt about the true significance of the word *leap*. To take the word in its literal sense is to acknowledge a physical impossibility as a true fact. Every student of ancient classics knows that it is not safe to interpret everything literally. There is much allegorical in it. Hence I have purposely used the word 'travel'.

master. You are our master and we are your servants. The master is to be protected like wife even by arms. Such is the immemorial custom from generation to generation. You are at the root of our adventure. Those who are adept in work, preserve the main-spring of their action ; then success follows as a matter of course. My boy, you are our lord, the son of our former master. We shall muster round you."

Then Angada replied, "If I do not go and if nobody else comes forward, then we should starve ourselves to death. If we do not carry out Sugriva's command, none will be safe. He can be mightily pleased as well as greatly angry. If we return unsuccessful, we shall surely meet with death at his hands. However, just devise some means from your experience for crossing the ocean."

Thereupon, Jambuvan said, "Angada ! This will not lower the reputation of your prowess and valour. I shall now speak of him, from whose prowess we shall achieve our end. I shall now employ him in that undertaking."

Then Jambuvan addressing the cast-down Vanara host said to Hanuman versed in all Shastras, "O chief of the Kapis, why are you silent ? Why have you not uttered a single word in this present discussion ? In accomplishment you are like Sugriva, and in valour and might like Rama and Lakshmana. Like Garuda amongst the birds you are the foremost among the Vanaras. I have seen many a time that mighty bird capturing huge sea-serpents from the ocean. Your hands are as strong as his wings. In intelligence,

strength and courage you are above the rest. Tell me then why you are indifferent now.

"O hero ! Just listen to a tale of old which I am now narrating to you. Once there was a beautiful nymph named Punjikasthala. She was also known as Anjana. She was wife of the Kapi-chief Keshari and daughter of Kunjara. Spotless Anjana was famous for her beauty in the three worlds, and there was none like her on the earth. On account of a curse she was born as a Vanara woman, but having heavenly virtues innate in her, she could assume any form at her will.

"Once Anjana, with her youth and beauty, was strolling about over the green hills. She was adorned with fine ornaments clad in yellow robes with pink borders and wore an excellent garland on her neck. The Wind-god gently wafted¹ the garment of large-eyed Anjana and thus her plump thighs, slim waist, heavy hips and stout breasts became exposed. He was charmed by her beauty and embraced her amorously. The chaste Anjana was alarmed by this and nervously asked who was thus violating her.

"Thereupon, the Wind-god replied, 'Ah, my beauty ! Don't be afraid. I am doing you no harm. By embracing you, I am entering your body only in thought. Now, you will bear in your womb a strong and intelligent boy, and he will possess power of locomotion like me.'

1 In the original the word means 'stole', i.e. removed but I have preferred "wafted"

"O hero! Anjana was pleased at these words and she delivered you in a cave. As soon as you were born, seeing the sun rising in the sky you took him to be an edible thing and soared into the sky. At that time, you sprang up three hundred Yojanas, yet you were not discomfited by the heat of the sun. The king of the gods seeing you thus proceeding in great speed along the sky became highly enraged and hurled his thunder at you. Being struck by it you fell down on a rock and your left jaw was broken. Since then you have been named as Hanuman.

"Thereupon, the Wind-god seeing you thus defeated grew sullen and ceased to blow. At this people of the three worlds got frightened and the gods endeavoured to please the Wind-god. Brahma said, 'This son of the Wind-god on account of my blessing won't be destroyed by arms.' Indra too was glad finding him to have survived the blow of thunder, and he blessed him saying, 'For my blessing the son of the Wind-god will die only at his will.'

"O hero! Thou art the son of Keshari by his wife, but hast sprung from the loins of the Wind-god. You are spirited and mighty and nothing can thwart your course. We are in despair of our lives, just save us all. You are skilful and accomplished. Rise up and cross the ocean. Look, the Vanara hosts are cast down. Prove your valour. Why are you sitting idle?"

Thereupon, to the delight of the Vanaras heroic Hanuman assumed a form fit for crossing the ocean. The Vanaras were greatly astonished at this, as in old

days the people were struck with wonder seeing Vamana¹ covering the three worlds. Hanuman expanded with vigour by brandishing his tail. The Vanaras began to praise him greatly and roared in joy. Hanuman expanded like a lion in his den and shone like a column of smokeless fire. Then rising suddenly from the Vanaras, after greeting the aged with due honours he said, "I, the son of the Wind-god, can uproot rocks and can always travel along the sky. Nowhere my course is resisted. I shall wheel round thousand times the Sumeru kissing the heaven and shall lash the sea with my two arms and thus shall deluge the rivers, hills and lakes. You will see the sea heaving up with crocodiles and sharks by the force of my legs and thighs² I shall wheel round like Garuda in the sky for a thousand time. I shall approach the sun before he travels from the Udayagiri to the Astagiri and shall fly back again without landing on the ground. I shall overstep the stars and planets. By the velocity of my speed flowers from shrubs and plants will follow my route, and my path being strewn with flowers will look like the milky way in the sky. Everybody will notice when I shoot up or drop down. I am huge as the Mahameru hill and everybody will see steering my course through the cloud. I shall immediately spread out in the voidness

1 Vamana is evidently the sun, covering the three worlds with its three positions in the sky—viz., in the morning, in the noon and in the evening.

2 Apparently it refers to swimming. Like the non-stoppage flight of an aeroplane.

of the sky like the lightning in a cloud. Vanaras, be assured, I can apprehend and infer that I shall find out Janaki. I can travel even thousands of *yojanas* and you will find me returning with nectar either from the possession of Indra or Brahma or with the ruins of Lanka."

When Hanuman was uttering these words, the Vanaras gazed at him with delight with their eyes expanded in deep amazement.

Then Jambuvan hearing those encouraging words said, "My boy ! You have removed all our sorrows, and let the Vanaras who wish you good, perform acts tending to your well-being. May you cross the ocean with blessings of the saints and with our prayers. So long as you don't return we shall stand here on our foot. You see our lives depend upon your return."

Then mighty Hanuman replied, "O Vanaras ! There lies the Mahendra hill at a short distance. It is strong and tinged with various mineral dyes. It will bear the momentum of my speed."

Saying this Hanuman began to range about the hill, from its peak, full of trees, creepers, birds and beasts. Being hurt by his arms, the Mahendra began to groan as an elephant when attacked by a lion. Everywhere the beasts and birds startled with fear and rocks began to tremble and fall.

Gandharva couples, addicted to drink, and the Vidyadharas left the place. The birds took to their wings and the snakes entered their holes, and some with their half-emerged bodies and panting breath, appeared like streaming pinions of the hill. Even the hermits ran into deep forests out of fear.

In the meantime, the heroic Hanuman just to muster his energy began to think of Lanka in his mind.

END OF KISHKINDHYA KANDAM

SUNDARA KANDAM

CHAPTER I

HANUMAN'S LEAP

Hanuman then resolved to travel through the air in quest of Janaki. In order to perform that arduous task he raised his head and stiffened his neck quite erect, for which he looked like a bull. He then walked over the earth, green with grass, with irresistible steps. At that time, he brushed aside all animals like a lion and crushed down many trees, and thereby scared away the feathered denizens of the forest. There were various minerals on the Mahendra hill shining in their pristine lustre. Hanuman standing at its foot looked like an elephant immersed in a lake !

After this, he bowed down to the Sun, Indra, Svayambhu, Wind-god, and all beings with joined palms and then facing the west he saluted his father and then began to increase in dimension like the sea. The Vanaras at this stared at him with their eyes wide open in deep amazement. The mighty hero got ready for crossing the ocean. He caught hold tightly of the mountain with his hands and feet. The hill at once shook and flowers began to drop down from the trees. Hanuman began to press the mountain more and more, and it began to spurt forth water like an elephant shedding its temporal sweat, and the golden, silvery and collyrium hues of the different minerals were all destroyed by that torrent of water. Heavy boulders rolled down with large blocks of red-arsenic ; then the hill looked like the smoke of a burning flame. Beasts and birds shrieked in

fear and ran in every direction and the snakes raising their spacious hoods began to bite at the rocks, as if they vomited fire in anger. Big rocks bit by those snakes crumbled into pieces and those fragments began to burn with fire-like venom. Although there were many medical herbs, they could not neutralise that poison.

At this sudden convulsion, the hermits thought that they were being riven by the Rakshasas. The Vidyadharas with their women ran away from their drinking haunts, leaving their golden seats, goblets, bowls, delicious articles for chewing, various kinds of meat, oxen, hides and swords with golden hilts. Fair damsels wearing necklaces, bracelets, anklets and carnation garlands, besmeared with red sandal paste and with their eyes red with wine dallying in amorous sports being startled by this strange occurrence, with their lovers, rose in the sky and watched the thing with delightful curiosity from above. The hermits thought about the great feat of Hanuman, undertaken for the benefit of Rama and Vanaras in general, and blessed that he would be able to cross the ocean easily.

Hearing this from the hermits, the Vidyadharas were struck with wonder and they repeatedly looked at Hanuman. Meanwhile the fire-like mighty hero trembled in his limbs and his hairs stood on their ends, and he roared like the rumbling of a cloud. He lashed his roundish tail covered with down again and again on his back just to get ready for the spring. It seemed as if Garuda, the king of the birds, was flying off with a huge snake.

He then firmly planted his arms like bolts on the mountain; then contracting his legs, neck and abdomen mustered his strength. He looked up and suspended his breath and then contracting his ears in order to spring, addressing other Vanaras, said, "I shall reach Lanka with the velocity of wind, just like an arrow shot by Rama and if I do not find Janaki there I shall, at the same speed, go to the region of the gods. If I do not meet with success even there, then I shall uproot Lanka and bring Ravana in bondage."

With these words Hanuman sprang at ease like Garuda. As he flew up, trees were uprooted from all sides. Hanuman coursed through the sky along with those trees, borne up by the violence of his flight. The Sala and palm trees went after him for a short time as people follow their friends bound for a distant land, or as the troops follow their king. Hanuman thus being covered with buds and blossoms looked like a hill lit up with glow-worms. Then the heavy trees being deprived of their flowers by the velocity of the flight began to drop down into the sea like mountains in fear of their wings being clipped by Indra,¹ and the flowers on account of their lightness gradually reached the sea. Then the surface of the sea being covered with those fragrant flowers looked like the star-spangled sky or like a cloud flashing with lightning. Hanuman with out-

¹ It is said that formerly the mountains had wings and they could move wherever they wished. In Milton's *Paradise Lost* also we find that mountains at first possessed power of locomotion.

stretched hands under the sky looked like a penta-hooded snake from a mountain crevice. It seemed, as if, the hero was going to devour both the ocean and the sky. His brown eyes, flashing like lightning, looked like two fires burning on the hill, and they resembled the sun and the moon fixed in a vast yellow aureola. His ruddy face with red nose looked like the crimson sun of the evening. The uplifted tail of Hanuman looked beautiful like the upraised standard of Indra. Being encircled by his own tail he appeared like the sun placed in the midst of the Zodiac. His red waist looked like the middle of a hill tinged with red minerals. The wind shut up within his arm-pits rumbled like clouds. Hanuman with his long tail looked like a comet¹ that issuing from the north shines like a luminous line in the sky. His shadow fell on the sea and he steered through the air like a ship. Huge billows rose over that part of the sea over which he passed, and he steered through with great speed breasting the mighty waves with his wide breast hard as a rock.² The wind, raised

1 In the original it is meteor, but the description tallies only with a comet.

2 Please mark this line, it means Hanuman swam across to Lanka. Swimming across the English Channel has become a possible feat. Now, if Ceylon be Lanka, its distance from the main land of India at that time might have been even less than that between Calais and Dover. There is confusion of metaphors and similes, two distinct facts, flying and swimming, having been interwoven here. Of course we should make allowance for poetical hyperboles.

by his breath and by the clouds, agitated the rolling deep greatly. Hanuman pushed forward by dividing the high waves raised by his velocity as if separating the earth from heaven. At that time it seemed as if he was engaged in courting the mountainous waves like the Meru and the Mandara and the waves lashed up by his speed reached the sky where they looked over-spreading the sky like the autumnal clouds.

Then all aquatic animals became visible like the body of a person when the cloth is taken off. The snakes were afraid seeing Hanuman going along the sky, like Garuda, and they were seized with fear. The shadow of this hero was ten *yojanas* wide and thirty *yojanas* long. The shadow followed him and it spread over the sea like a mass of cloud. He steered in the void like a winged mountain. The clouds began to rain in torrents over the sea being disturbed by his motion. The mighty hero flew sometimes like Garuda and sometimes like the wind through bands of variegated clouds. In the course of his journey sometimes he became concealed behind a mass of clouds and then immediately emerged from them like the full moon.

The gods and the Gandharvas then began to shower flowers on him for his astonishing feat. The sun lessened its heat and the wind began to blow gently. The Nagas, Yakshas and the Rakshasas began to sing his praise seeing him thus unexhausted.

In the meantime the Ocean out of honour to the Ikshwaku line, thought, "If I do not help Hanuman, the chief of the Kapis, people will speak ill of me. Sagara,

the Ikshwaku king, has widened my expanse. This hero is a great friend to that Ikshwaku family. It is my duty to devise some means so that this hero may take some rest and traverse the rest of the journey at ease."

Arguing thus, addressing the golden Mainaka; the Ocean said, "Indra has placed you as a bar to prevent the ingress and egress of the Asuras from the nether region. You are endowed with wonderful powers and you can expand yourself at will. Rise up at once from the sea. Look, Hanuman for Rama's work is nearing you along the sky. He is fatigued. So get up soon."

Instantly, the Mainaka hill rose from beneath, it seemed as if the sun rose bursting asunder the veil of clouds. At that time the sky and the steel-like sea turned into golden hue with its lustre.

Hanuman thus finding the Mainaka rising suddenly from the saltish sea considered it as an impediment in his path. He brushed it aside by his breast as the wind disperses the clouds. At this Mainaka was immensely pleased and assuming the form of a man came to his peak and said, "O chief of the Kapis! You are engaged in a very difficult task. So please take a little rest on my cliff. Descendants of Raghu have contributed to the increase of the Ocean and you are bent upon Rama's good; so the Ocean-god shows you hospitality. It is the time-honoured custom to do good in return to the benefit one receives. He has told me that you are to cover hundred *Yojanas*; so he has asked me to rise up for your rest. There is plenty of palatable fruit and roots; partake of them at your will. You are the chief of the

Kapis and I have some connection with you, but not to speak of you, it is one's duty to entertain even an humble guest. Your speed is like that of your father, the Wind-god. Now listen to me why you are an object of my honour.

"In the golden age, the mountains had their wings. They flew about in great speed, and the gods and the Maharshis became afraid of them, lest they might fall on them. Then Indra began to clip their wings in anger and he appeared before me in rage. At that time, your father carried me along the sky and then dropped me into the sea. My wings were saved by him. This is why I am honouring you. Time has come to requite that good service. I have been immensely pleased at your sight. So accept my offerings and take a little rest."

Then Hanuman replied, "Mainaka, enough hospitality has been shown by these words. Don't be sorry, pressing duties wait upon me and the day too is about to decline. Moreover, it is my solemn determination not to take any rest within hundred Yojanas, so let me go."

Saying this, Hanuman went on with unabated speed, only after touching the Mainaka. Both the hill and the sea stared in wonder at him.

Hanuman then rose into the sky and proceeded along his journey. All admired his heroic feat. In the meantime, Indra was pleased at the conduct of Mainaka and addressing him said, "This hero is going for Rama's work and since you have honoured him I have been pleased with your action, go wherever you like."

Mainaka was delighted seeing Indra thus pleased, so

ne sank back under the water after getting the boon from Indra.

Then the Suras, Siddhyas, Maharshis and the Gandharvas addressing Surasa, the spirited mother of the Nagas, said, "O Goddess! Look there, auspicious Hanuman is crossing the sea. Just assume the form of a dreadful Rakshasi and put some obstacles in his path. We want to test his valour. We shall see whether he can conquer you or becomes paralysed with fear."

Thereupon, Surasa assuming the hideous form of a Rakshasi, obstructing Hanuman's passage said, "Gods have ordained you as my fare, so I shall devour you to-day. So enter into the cavity of my mouth."

With these words she stood up before Hanuman with her mouth gaping wide.

Then Hanuman said, "Rama, the son of Dasaratha, has come to the Dandaka forest with his brother and wife. There he incurred great hostility with the Rakshasas. When he was absent, Ravana stole his wife. I have been sent as an envoy to honourable Janaki. The earth belongs to Rama and you live within it, so it is your duty to help him. However, I swear to come back to you after giving information of Janaki to Rama."

Then Surasa, eager to test his valour, said, "Formerly Prajapati Brahma¹ granted me this boon that

1 Almost all the Rakshasas got their boons, which were often injurious to the people at large, mostly from the Aryan god Brahma. It is really perplexing. It proves at least one thing that both the Rakshasas (Non-Aryans) and men (the Aryans) had one religion and they worshipped the same gods and goddesses and the gods themselves made no distinction between the two.

whoever shall come near me I shall devour him. Now, if you have power, you may come out of my jaws." At this Hanuman was highly enraged and said, "O Rakshasi, then open your mouth in proportion to my size." Saying this Hanuman expanded his body to ten *yojanas*, Surasa gaped her mouth twenty *yojanas*. That hideous mouth looked like the abyss of hell. Hanuman then extended his body to thirty *yojanas* and Surasa her mouth to forty *yojanas*, then Hanuman to fifty *yojanas* and Surasa to sixty, then Hanuman to seventy and Surasa to eighty, thereupon Hanuman to ninety and Surasa to a hundred.

Then Hanuman suddenly contracting his body like a cloud entered into Surasa's mouth and instantly came out of it and rising into the sky said, "Dakshayani ! I have come out of your mouth, I bow down to you. Now I go for Janaki."

Then Naga-mother Surasa seeing Hanuman coming out of her mouth like the moon from the jaws of Rahu, assumed her own form and contentedly said, "Go wherever you like and endeavour to find out Janaki."

At this the rangers of the sky praised Hanuman greatly. Hanuman proceeded along the sky. The limitless sky spread to limitless distance. It was tempered by clouds. Birds were flying in it. The rainbow adorned it. And Gandharvas, the masters of music and dancing were roving about. Wonderful chariots drawn by lions and tigers were plying through it. It was the abode of the pious. There sacred fire carrying clarified butter (in the sacrifice) was always burning. There the sun and

the moon and other heavenly bodies shone. Maharshis, Nagas and Yakshas resided there. It is the support of the universe, and is like a canopy of the living world.

In the meantime, a Rakshasi, named Sinhika, seeing Hanuman thought of him as her destined morsel. She then followed the shadow of Hanuman. At this Hanuman got startled and thought : "As the course of a sea-going vessel is stopped by the wind blowing in opposite direction, so my journey has been thwarted."

Thus thinking he looked around and found a hideous Rakshasi rising from the saltish sea. At that sight, he understood that it was the creature spoken of by Sugriva who captures living beings by their shadows.

Then Sinhika opening her mouth, as wide as the space from the nether region to the heaven, pursued Hanuman. Hanuman then tried to find out her vital spot. Hanuman at once reduced his size entered her mouth and tore her heart into pieces with his sharp nails. Thus after cleverly destroying the Rakshasi, he emerged from her mouth like the wind. Thereupon, the denizens of the sky praised him saying, "You have destroyed the Rakshasi by your valour. May you achieve your object ! He who has patience, intelligence, keen sight and skill, like you never loses his heart in any thing.

Thus Hanuman proceeded in great speed. The other shore of the sea was near. In the course of his journey, he saw islands covered with trees, the Malaya hill, junctions of the rivers with the sea. His vast size overcast the sky as if with a cloud. He then thought

that his vast size and speed might rouse the curiosity of the Rakshasas. So he diminished his body, huge as a mountain, and resumed his former self like a yogi freed from all worldly delusions. It seemed then as if God Vishnu after covering the three worlds by his three steps had resumed his former self.

There was a long range of hills along the margin of the sea, abounding in Ketakas, Uddalakas and cocoanut trees. Hanuman after crossing the ocean by his valour alighted on a rocky brow of an inclined cliff. Beasts and birds were startled by it. On arriving there, he saw the city of Lanka, like the heavenly city of Amaravati.

CHAPTER II

THE CITY OF LANKA

The hero endowed with great strength did not feel fatigued even after crossing a hundred *yojanas*—sea. He was not breathing hard even after such a hard labour. He stood with an unshaken body. Not to speak of hundred *yojanas*, it was possible for this hero to travel even more. Then the trees began to shower flowers on his head. Being covered with flowers he stood like a tree in blossoms. Another name of Lanka hill was Trikuta, and the city of the Rakshasas stood on it. Hanuman in slow paces proceeded towards it. There the tableland was covered with green grass and fragrant shrubs and the trees stood there in beautiful rows.¹ Hanuman took a middle road to Lanka. Various trees grew in the Trikuta. There were Deodars,

¹ Beautiful avenues are still to be found in Ceylon.

Karnikas, Dates, Piyalas, Kutujas, Ketakas, fragrant Priyangu, Kovidaras, Kadamvas, Saptachhadas, Asanas, and Karviras. Of them many were in blossoms. Some were even bent down with the weight of flowers and their leaves were gently shaking in the breeze. And birds were singing sweetly on their boughs. There were many crystal lakes and tanks full of white and red lotuses; swans and cranes were sporting amongst them. Here and there stood sporting haunts on hills with beautiful gardens attached to them. Hanuman seeing all these on his way, at last, arrived at Lanka protected by Ravana. The great city was surrounded by a moat, full of lilies, and since the abduction of Sita, the rovers of the night at the command of Ravana were guarding it on all sides with bows and arrows.

It was a highly beautiful city, girt by a golden wall, with lofty white mansions and yellow¹ high ways. Its gates were covered with creepers and adorned with streaming banners. The heavenly architect Viswakarma had built that city with great care. As a mountain cave is infested with snakes, so dreadful Rakshasas lived there. The city was situated on the summit of a hill, and it seemed as if it was soaring in the sky. It looked like the creation of fancy! Arms, like Sataghnis and Sulas, were kept in different parts. Hanuman, in amazement, stared at it, as Indra looked upon Amara-vati with admiration.

The hero gradually came to the northern gate of

1 Perhaps due to sands of that hue.

the city. It was high, as if kissing the sky, and it looked like the gate of Alaka—the city of Kuvera. The houses there were so high that it seemed that they were supporting the sky, so to say! Hanuman considering the strong defence and the prowess of the formidable enemy Ravana and also of the sea intervening, thought, "Even if the Vanaras succeed in reaching Lanka, they won't be able to conquer. It is impossible even for the gods to occupy the city without war. This city is quite impregnable. I know not what Rama will do arriving here. A treaty with the Rakshasas is out of the question, nor do I see any favourable circumstances in winning them over by gifts, or by sowing dissensions amongst them in the war. Perhaps, it will be difficult even for Sugriva, Angada, Nila and other Vanaras to reach the place. However, let me now find out whether Janaki is alive or not. I shall decide the course of action after I meet her."

Hanuman then sat upon the hill and thought of the means for meeting Sita. He thought, "Lanka is surrounded by the Rakshasa soldiers, how can I enter there with my present self. The Rakshasas are quite formidable and so it is necessary to delude them for finding out Janaki. I shall, therefore, enter the city by night in invisible form."

Hanuman heaved deep sighs, finding Lanka thus inaccessible to the gods and the Asuras. He again thought, "How shall I meet Janaki in absence of the wicked Ravana? It is not proper to neglect Rama's mission, but how shall I meet her? Acts about to be crowned

with success are often marred by thoughtlessness of the agents employed for them. Even a course of action having been decided after due-deliberations, becomes frustrated for the fault of the envoys. Emissaries proud of their education or intelligence often become the cause of failure. It is now my duty to be careful about the means by which we can achieve our object and succeed in crossing the ocean. Rama desires to punish Ravana, but if the Rakshasas can detect me, that end will be frustrated. It is not possible to enter the city even in the guise of a Rakshasa. Not to speak of anything else, even the wind cannot blow here without being noticed. It is not possible to do anything in Lanka without the knowledge of the Rakshasas. If I appear in my native form I shall surely lose my life, and great obstacles will crop up for the realisation of my master's object. So I shall enter the city in a dwarfish form during the night, and I shall find out Janaki after a thorough search of every house." Thus thinking Hanuman waited for the sunset.

At last, the sun went down and the night set in. Then Hanuman diminished his body to the dimension of a cat and became wonderful to behold. He then quickly entered the beautiful Lanka in the evening. Its highways were broad and lined with palaces with golden pillars and windows with golden net-works. At one place stood seven-storied houses, at another, eight storied ones with courtyards, decorated with gold and crystal and provided here and there with golden gates of wonderful workmanship. Hanuman felt sad at the

sight of the rich city ; but his eagerness to find out Janaki cheered him up for the quest.

In the meantime, the moon drew a canopy of light over the world. The moon rose as if to render help to Hanuman. She was shining in her lily-white purity amongst the stars, and Hanuman saw the moon rising in the sky like a swan swimming in the blue waters of a lake.

CHAPTER III

THE VIEW OF LANKA

Then the intelligent hero relying on his courage entered the city at night. Lanka was situate on the high summit of the Lanka hill. There the woods were beautiful, waters were crystal clear, and the palaces white as the autumnal clouds. The sea-breeze was blowing there day and night. Big tuskers and formidable Rakshasas were roving about hither and thither. It seemed to be the capital of the nether world guarded by the formidable Uragas or snakes, rather like Amara-vati, the heavenly city, dotted with clouds charged with lightning and illumined with stars and other heavenly planets. Here and there streamers were streaming in the wind with a gentle murmuring noise. Its gates were made of gold and their thresholds were inlaid with rubies, gems and other precious stones. Its flights of stairs were wrought with gems. Everything was highly neat and clean. There stood the assembly-room with its high roof.¹ It was resonant with the

¹ This description in this place does not at all fit in with the subsequent description of the outskirts of the city.

flourish of trumpets and the jingling sound of ornaments. Peacocks, swans and Kraunchas were roaming about in flocks. Hanuman was mightily pleased at the sight of the city. He thought, "The Rakshasas are ever guarding it with arms ready to strike ! Nobody can enter it by force. But perhaps Kumuda, Angada, Susena and other heroes like them may enter it." Then thinking of the prowess of Rama and Lakshmana, he felt elated in his mind.

Lanka was lighted all through and there was no darkness at all. Hanuman thus proceeded seeing everything in this way.

In the meantime, guardian deity of Lanka seeing Hanuman at the gate with a hideous face and fearful eyes appeared before the Vanara and with a thundering voice asked, "Who art thou ? Why hast thou come here ? Tell the truth or I shall destroy thee immediately, the city is guarded on all sides by the rovers of the night. Thou wilt not be able to enter it in any way."

Hanuman replied, "Ah ruthless creature ! I shall certainly tell thee what thou askest. But tell me first who thou art. Why art thou standing at the gate and abusing me thus ?"

Then the deity of Lanka harshly replied, "You despicable Vanara ! I am a servant of Ravana, the Rakahasa chief, and am guarding the city. You will never succeed in entering the city by setting me at naught. I am myself the guardian deity of Lanka and to speak the truth, you will measure the ground being killed by my hand."

Then Hanuman stood firm as a rock and said, "O worshipful lady ! I shall see this Lanka surrounded by a moat, and shall with my own eyes see its buildings, gardens and forests. I have come here out of this curiosity."

Thereupon, Lanka again harshly replied, "You fool ! Mighty Ravana protects this Lanka, so you won't be able to see it without conquering me."

Then Hanuman humbly replied, "O gentle lady ! I shall go to my own place after seeing the city of Lanka"

Seeing such importunity of Hanuman, Lanka was greatly enraged, and slapped him with great force. Thereupon, Hanuman roared in anger and struck her with his left fist. Lanka was a woman ; he therefore did not give full vent to his wrath. Then the Rakshasi with a hideous grimace reeled on the ground. Hanuman was greatly pained at that sight.

Then Lanka said with submissive voice, "Be pleased, O mighty hero ! Heroes never violate the Shashtra. I am the guardian deity of Lanka, and you have vanquished me by your prowess. Now I shall tell you an old story, just listen to me. Once, God Swayambhu said to me, "Rakshasi, when you will meet with defeat at the hands of a Vanara, then you should know that evil days for the Rakshasas have come. With your advent that time has arrived. Nothing can avert the decree of the Almighty Creator. Now, for the wicked Ravana the downfall of the Rakshasas is come. Curse has fallen upon the city. You may now freely enter the city and search for Sita everywhere."

CHAPTER IV

INSIDE THE CITY

Then Hanuman, by night, leaped over the city-wall where there was no door, and from his daring feat it appeared as if he planted his left foot on the crown of Ravana.

The highways of Lanka were broad and strewn with flowers and Hanuman proceeded along them. The city was crowded with the lofty mansions of the Rakshasas. Somewhere, he heard noise of laughter and somewhere blasts of trumpets. Those houses were spotlessly white, decorated with floral wreaths and built in the Padma and Swastika styles of architecture. Devices of thunder-bolts and goads were painted on them, and there spread a sheen of jewels from the windows. Hanuman proceeded for the work of Rama. He was greatly delighted by those sights. There, beautiful damsels, stricken with amour, were singing sweetly in three octaves, low and soft. Somewhere the jingling sounds of the anklets or of the golden zones, or the sound of foot-falls on the stairs were heard. Some were clapping their hands and were roaring in joy. In some houses, the Vedas¹ were being read, or their Mantras were chanted. At different places the Rakshasas were singing Ravana's praise. Hanuman saw all these during his journey. He saw spies lying hidden in the groves. Some of them had their crowns shaved, while others wore matted locks

1 Yet we are asked to believe that the Rakshasas were cannibal monsters.—Translator.

on their heads. Many were clad in calf-skin, some in cotton fabrics, while others had no clothing on them. All those Rakshasas were variously armed. All were protected with armours. They were of various colours and of various looks. They were neither very tall nor very dwarfish, neither very stout nor very lean, neither very fair nor very dark. They were beautiful and hideous ! They were dressed in various styles. Some had staffs or flags in their hands. They never shrank from anything for moral scruples. They were guards of Ravana.

At last, the hero came near the gate, and heard neighings of the horses. Well-decorated white elephants were stationed at different quarters. There were various kinds of chariots, carriages, and vehicles. The gate was set with precious jewels, and strongly guarded by the Rakshasa soldiers. It was girt by a golden wall and out of it rose the scented fume of black Aguru and Sandal.

At that time, the moon was pouring her silvery light in the sky. It was white as the lotus and the conch and was surrounded by a galaxy of stars. At that time, all forgot their sufferings and woes, the sea heaved and the earth was tinged with light. The moon looked like the Goddess of beauty when she walks over the Mandara hill, or bathes in the evening sea, or sports amongst the lotuses by day ! The moon looked like a swan in a silvery cage. The moon with her black train looked like a bull with sharp horns. She began to rain her influence under the sky ; with the advance of

these twilight-beauties the sullenness of the proud damsels was removed. Sweet sounds of lyre began to rise and the beauties slept by embracing their husbands. Ravenous beasts were out for their prey.

Hanuman saw some places rendered noisy by a drinking party. At some place people were abusing each other. At some place a warrior was swinging his arm or thumping his breast with his fist. Somewhere, a lover was caressing his lady-love by gentle strokes of his palm. Somewhere huge elephants were trumpeting. At some spots the pious people were assembled. Hanuman was mightily pleased at these sights. He found the Nishacharas,¹ sweet-speeched and theistic. Their names were sweet-sounding and pleasing to the ear. They were the foremost people of the earth. They were differently dressed and even those who were ugly among them, appeared beautiful on account of their dress. They were accomplished and pursued deeds after their qualities. Their wives were pure, generous, devoted to their husbands and fond of drink. All those women were attired in excellent apparel and in their effulgence shone like stars. They were highly bashful. Some of them were seated on the terrace, and some on the laps of their lovers. They were after the minds of their husbands, and were engaged in ministering to their needs. Some were of golden hue and some were white as the moon. Some of them were without

1 Nishachara literally means rovers of the night, another name for the Rakshasas. Please mark the high civilisation of the Rakshasas (vide intro).

their clothes. Some were sad for the absence of their lovers and some were glad for their union. The lotus-like faces of those women were beautiful as the moon, with side-long looks of love in their eyes, shaded with lovely lashes. They wore garlands of flowers and their ornaments glittered like lightning. Hanuman was greatly pleased at their sight, but amongst them, he did not find Sita, beautiful as a flowery creeper,—the virtuous Sita created from the mind of the Creator in the royal line. She was devoted to her husband and was ever thinking of Rama. That enchantress of Rama's mind used to talk in the notes of wild peacock.

She was lovely like an indistinct lunar disc, like a streak of gold covered with dust, like a golden reed broken by the wind, like a scar left by an arrow !

CHAPTER V

RAVANA'S PALACE

At last, walking on the roof of a seven-storied house Hanuman saw at a short distance the palace of Ravana. It was girt by a red glittering wall. Formidable Rakshāsas were guarding the palace as the lions keep watch over a forest. The palace was furnished at different points with doors worked with silver and ornamented with gold and had spacious rooms in it. Cars decorated with images of gold, silver and ivory, were plying with a deep rumbling noise. The palace was full of jewels furnished with costly furniture. It was peopled by veteran warriors and surrounded by

beautiful sights. There the damsels were ever dallying in amorous sports, and the jingling sounds of their ornaments resounded the palace. All the articles of royal use were heaped in the palace. Its halls were echoing like the deep rumbling sea. They were stuffed with excellent apparel and precious jewels. There the Rakshasas, on festive occasions, prepared Soma, drink for sacrifice,¹ and gods were ever worshipped there. Hanuman considered the spot as the ornament of Lanka.

He then walked over the wall and surveyed room after room, garden after garden. He then entered the residence of Prahasta, thence that of Mahaparshwa, and after that he espied into the abodes of mighty Kumbhakarna, Vibhishana, Mahodara, Virupaksha, Vidyutjihva, Vidyunmali, Vahudranstha, Sruka, Sarana, Indrajit, Jamvumali, Sumali, Rashmiketū, Surya, Saram, Dhumraksha, Sampati, Vidyurudrupa, Bhima, Ghana, Vighna, Shukanabha, Chakra, Satha, Kapata, Harshwakarna, Dranstha, Lomasva, Ydhyonmatta, Matta, Dhvajagriva, Sadi, Dijivhva, Hastinuikha, Karala, Visala, Raktaksha and of others. These Nishacharas were immensely rich and Hanuman saw their wealth. At a little distance from those was the residence of Ravana. It was ever guarded by many odd-looking Rakshasis and gigantic Rakshasas with lances, clubs, Saktis and Bhomras in their turn. There were beautiful steeds swift as the wind, and mighty elephants with

1 An absolutely Aryan custom of the Vedic time.

temporal sweats running down their cheeks, who looked like mountain-peaks, with drizzling clouds and fountain running on them ; they were formidable as the heavenly elephant Airavata and scattered the enemy's rank by their deep rumbling sound. Troops were stationed at points of that beautiful place. At some places various tents with golden nets were pitched, glittering like the morning sun ; there were beautiful grottos and sporting enclosures. Somewhere he saw excellent groves, places of assignment and amorous dalliance by day and by night. He saw picture-galleries and artificial hillocks. The beautiful palace of Ravana looked like a peak thronged with pinions and flagstuffs, with stands for peacocks to perch upon, and full of gems and riches, and intrepid persons were engaged in protecting that vast treasure. The palace, like that of Kuvera, the lord of wealth, was replendent with the sheen of jewels and the effulgence of Ravana's energy. There were dishes beset with gems from which food was taken and bedsteads and seats were made of gold. There wine flowed in streams, and a sweet jingling noise was heard from that twinkling zones and anklets of women and from tambours. Big mansions with spacious halls crowded upon one another.

CHAPTER VI

INSIDE THE PALACE

Hanuman saw Ravana's palace with golden casements studded with gems like banks of clouds glistening.

with lightning. He saw large conchs,¹ bright arms, and above all stood a beautiful tower. This faultless structure was the admiration of the Gods and the Asuras. Ravana occupied it by his own prowess. It was built with great care, as it the Danava architect Maya constructed it by his magic. There was not a more splendid mansion than this on earth. In that beautiful palace there was not a spot of incomparable beauty, as if heaven had descended on earth ! It was spacious like a cloud, and lovely like a chariot drawn by the horses. It was resplendent with the shine of jewels and was in perfect keeping with the royal prowess. There the trees bent down with bunches of flowers and their pollens, were being blown about by the wind. There were dazzling beauties like lightning and there stood the famous Pushpaka Ratha of Ravana, that chariot looked like a hill tinged with mineral dyes like the star-bespangled sky, like a cloud shining with diverse colours. There in the open space, designed for accommodating seats for many, stood golden hills adorned with flowery trees, and there in that chariot white halls, ranks with lotuses and beautiful woods were seen. There were birds of games, golden reptiles, life-like horses, and birds with their wings a little bent and contracted, and flowers of jewels were engraved in that, there the elephants seemed to be restive,² their bodies crimsoned with lotus-

1 In ancient times on the field of battle conchs used to be blown like blasts of trumpets.

2 Please mark the workmanship of engraving and painting of that time.—Translator,

pollens and holding lotus leaves in their trunks ; and somewhere the Goddess of wealth, Kamala stood upon a lotus with her lotus-like hands. Thus Ravana's palace was furnished with various furniture. It was extremely beautiful like a summer tree with a lovely halo, or a hill with a beautiful cave. Hanuman was simply struck with wonder at its sight. He began to range about the palace, but became extremely sad for not seeing the worshipful Sita devoted to the accomplished (but modest) Rama.

Standing there Hanuman began to gaze upon the Pushpaka Ratha¹ repeatedly. It was furnished with golden windows set with gems and adorned with beautiful images. Divine artisan Viswakarma praised it as the most beautiful object in the whole creation. This Ratha soared up in the sky and reached even the orbit of the sun. Its every part was made with care, and everything in it was most costly, and the skill of workmanship manifested in that car was not to be found even in the heavenly Rathas.

Each one of its parts had a particular virtue. It could go unobstructed wherever its riders listed to proceed. Ravana obtained it by virtue of his spiritual attainments (Tapasya). Pushpaka was swift as the wind and was inaccessible to those who had no virtuous merit, and carried only those who were famous, happy and rich. By regulating its motion it could reach any part of the sky. It was high as a cliff and had several apartments. It was borne by the spirits with their revolving and winkless eyes. The rangers of the sky that roved by night, wore ear-rings and were fond of heavy meals.

1 Henceforth I have preferred to retain the original expression Ratha, for from its very description, it seems it would be wrong to translate it as a chariot.—Translator.

CHAPTER VII

RAVANA'S CHAMBER

Hanuman then saw Ravana's abode in that big mansion. That was divided into several chambers. It was half-a-*yojana* in breadth and one *yojana* in length. Hanuman ranged about that place in search of the large-eyed Sita. He saw the spacious abode of Ravana guarded by three-tusked elephants and mastodons with four tusks, and by the Rakshasas with upraised weapons. In some of the chambers, he saw the Rakshasa wives of Ravana and princesses procured by force. The hall seemed as calm and deep as the sea with sharks, crocodiles and whales ! Steadfast splendour of the moon was for ever there ! His prosperity seemed to exceed that of Kuvera, Yama and Varuna. Within the palace stood Pushpaka built by Viswakarma for Brahma. Kuvera got it from Brahma for his religious merit, Ravana procured it after vanquishing Kuvera by his might. That Ratha had golden flights of stairs, crystal windows and daises of sapphire set with precious rubies and pearls ; its beautiful terrace, painted with perfumed red sandal paste, was radiant like the newly-risen sun. Hanuman then got upon the Pushpaka, and being seated upon it he began to sniff delicious smell of rich viands and drinks. Hanuman's body became scented with that fragrance, and from that he inferred it to be Ravana's residence.

Hanuman then got down from the Pushpaka and entered into the bed-chamber of Ravana. It was a

superbly beautiful hall. Its flights of stairs were wrought with gems, windows were made of gold, terraces of crystal, and images of ivory stood here and there. On all sides rose stately pillars with gems ; it seemed as if the hall was like a bird with its wings spread ! Under the terrace hung a four-cornered painted canopy. It was white as a swan but cloudy with the smoke of Aguru. It was decorated with diverse leaves and flowers, like Vasistha's cow of variegated hues. Every one was delighted by its sight. One would grow healthy by its radiant shine, and it delighted the senses of Hanuman, as a mother does her child with objects of beauty, taste, etc. At the sight of that hall Hanuman was puzzled. Was it an illusion, was it heaven, or the region of Varuna ? He saw lamps burning upon the golden pillars, but robbed of their effulgence, (the glitter of gold,) like gamblers worsted in the game of dice by their cunning opponents, hence gloomy and plunged in thought. At that time, the hall was exceedingly luminous by the effulgence of Ravana and by the sheen of jewels.

There, a number of beautiful damsels, adorned with excellent garlands and attired in superb apparel and ornaments were lying on painted woollen sheets. It was past midnight, they had then ceased from their amorous sports and were buried in deep sleep under the influence of drink. The jingling sounds of their ornaments were no more to be heard, so it appeared like a field of lotuses devoid of the hissing noise of snakes. The eyes of those damsels were closed, and

sweet lotus-like smell was coming out of their mouth. Those faces bloomed like lotuses (when awake) at day and at night they appeared like lotus buds (being gathered in sleep). And at their sight Hanuman thought that the bees would ever wish for those lotus-like faces. In fact, for their beauty he then thought of their countenances to be veritable lotuses.

Ravana's bed-chamber was full of these beautiful damsels, hence the place looked like the clear blue autumnal sky strewn with stars ! Ravana, the Rakshasa chief, was always surrounded by those faultless beauties, for which he appeared like the beautiful moon encircled by a galaxy of stars. Then Hanuman seeing those royal dames thought that those stars that for the loss of their virtues had dropped from the heaven were lying in that chamber ! In short, their beauty, grace and radiance were like that of the stars. From drink and dalliance their hair was dishevelled and the jewellery lay scattered about them. Each one was buried in deep sleep. Some of the beauties had their paints off, anklets fell from some one's feet, and bracelets from the wrists of some ; some one's gold chain hung on one's sides ! Some one's pearl necklace was torn ; some one's zone had slipped, some one's cloth had fallen off from her. They were under the influence of wine and were fatigued like pack-horses from carrying burden. Some one's ear-ring was broken, while another's garland was torn. Each one looked pretty like a tender flowery creeper trampled by an elephant ! Some beauty's pear necklace, white as the moonbeam, gathered into a heap

between her two breasts, appeared like a sleeping swan. Some one's chain of lapis lazuli looked like a water-fowl while another's golden necklace looked like a Chakravaka. Those beauties looked like so many rivulets, their hips for banks, zones for ripples, and faces for golden lotuses ! Of those damsels, some bore marks of amorous dalliance on their breast and some on their tender flesh. Some one's scarf gently shaken by her breath was repeatedly screening her face, as if a pinion of gold-thread was gently waving in the breeze ; another's earring was being gently tossed by her scented breath. Some one under the influence of sleep was repeatedly kissing her rival's face thinking it be that of Ravana. Every one was deeply attached to Ravana, so her rival too kissed her co-wife's lips in return under the influence of liquor, thinking it as that of Ravana. Some one converted her arm adorned with jewels into her pillow ; some one rested her head on another's breast, while a third lay upon the latter's head ; one was lying on another's lap, while a third one slept over the former's bosom. Thus all slept together leaning against one another, and with their interlocked arms they looked like a threaded garland, and it seemed as if the creepers, blossomed at the advent of the spring, being shaken by the wind got interlaced with their clusters of flowers touching on one another. Being gathered in sleep, hardly any difference was perceptible amongst them. Ravana was then buried in sleep, so the glare of the golden lamp fell full upon those sleeping beauties without fear—as if gazing on them with winkless eyes !

The daughters of royal saints, Brahmanas, Daityas, Gandharvas, and of the Rakshasas being smitten with Cupid, had come of their own accord, being enamoured of Ravana's beauty and splendour. All were high-born queens and by their beauty and attainments were great favourites of Ravana.¹

Then Hanuman thought, "Had Rama's wife been, like these royal dames, a queen of Ravana, it would have been better of Ravana, but she is greatly devoted to Rama, and Ravana with great difficulty has carried her off by assuming a magic form."

CHAPTER VIII

RAVANA

When Hanuman was looking round the bed-chamber, his eyes fell upon a crystal dais. It was wrought with jewels and was exceedingly beautiful. In fact, there was none like it in the whole world. Upon it stood a bedstead of Sapphire, the stands (legs) of which were made of ivory inlaid with gold, and over it was spread the most costly coverlet. The bedstead was decorated with wreaths of Asoka and on one end stood an umbrella white as the moon. Everywhere artificial

1 In spite of poetical hyperboles, the question about the civilisation of the Rakshasas and the greatness of Ravana becomes more paramount. In the next chapter, there is allusion to artificial figures with mechanical contrivances that fanned Ravana with long white hairs of the tail of the cow of Tartary.—Translator.

figures with mechanical contrivances were waving their fans and Chowris. It was fragrant with diverse perfumes and with the incense of Aguru, and over it spread highly delicate soft kid skins.

Upon that bed King Ravana was asleep. His body was besmeared with sweet-scented red sandal. His colour was dark like that of a deep blue cloud. He wore bright ear-rings, cloth of gold and had various ornaments on his person. He looked like a cloud tinged with the evening rays and fraught with lightning ; it seemed as if the Mandara hill covered with flowery creepers fell upon the surface of the earth ! He was beautiful and could assume any form at his will. After ceasing from the revelries of drink he was breathing heavily like an elephant in sleep

Seeing Ravana, the chief of Lanka, Hanuman fell back with fear. Then gently ascending the stairs Hanuman repeatedly gazed at the mighty hero numbed with wine.

The powerful Ravana was sleeping and his bed seemed to be a grand cascade, and his arms outspread like the flagstaves of Indra. They were adorned with ornaments and were strong and firm like bolts and the trunk of an elephant. His thumbs and beautiful nails and his fingers being adorned with rings looked like a penta-headed snake. And his arms bore the marks of wounds caused by the tusks of Airavata, by the thunderbolt of Indra and by the discus of Vishnu. They were smeared with sweet-scented sandal. Those mighty arms had vanquished the Gods and the Asuras in the field of battle.

Great Ravana looked highly beautiful with those arms. His perfumed breath carrying the fragrance of Punnaga and Vakula flowers and of wine filled the rooms. His countenance was beautiful with resplendent ear-rings ; and his jewelled diadem of gold slipped on one side, his mighty chest was smeared with sandal paste, and was radiant with jewel-necklace and he wore a white¹ silken cloth. At that time he appeared like an elephant immersed in the bed of the Ganges !

At that time, four golden lamps burnt in the four corners of the room, and like lightning in a mass of clouds, it rendered the dark figure of Ravana distinctly visible. His wives were lying under his feet. Their countenances were beautiful as the moon, and they wore sapphire ear-rings, diamond bracelets, and garlands of unfaded lustre. By their beauty the bed appeared like a star-bespangled sky. They were highly skilled in music and dancing ; and being overcome with fatigue they were then enjoying rest in sleep. One beauty skilled in dancing slept embracing the lyre (Vina) betraying a graceful posture of dancing, as if a full-blown lotus drifted by the current was resting by the side of a craft ! Some one slept with Mudduka musical instrument on her lap—like the mother sleeping with her baby ; one lay with tambour, another with Panava, while a third one slept having the Dindimas both in front of her and at her back—like a woman sleeping with her husband and child. One lotus-eyed beauty lay

1 In some reading it is yellow colour.—Translator.

embracing her Vina like an amorous girl hugging her lover to her breast. Some one slept crossing her fair arms on her lovely breast, like two golden pitchers. Amongst those beauties, Hanuman saw Mandodari, the beloved queen of Ravana. She was sleeping on a separate bed, adorned with ornaments and illumined the hall by the radiance of her beauty. Her colour was that of flaming gold and she was the queen of the harem. Seeing the beauty and youth of Mandodari, Hanuman took her to be Janaki. At this Hanuman's face brightened with joy, and true to the mercurial temperament of his race he danced and sang in delight, kissed his tail and swung his arms.

CHAPTER IX

HANUMAN'S REFLECTIONS

Hanuman then renouncing his apish thoughts, meditated coolly. "Janaki is extremely devoted to Rama and it is not at all likely that being separated from Rama she would indulge in food or drink or in any sort of luxury even in sleep. Luxury in dress or ornaments must be out of question in her case. Not to speak of others, she will not even crave for Indra. Rama is the best of all, there is no second to him even amongst the gods. So the lady I am now beholding must be some other woman."

Thus thinking, Hanuman for some time paced up and down over the place of dancing. The beautiful damsels slept round about the place, some tired with

singing, some with dancing, and some intoxicated with drink. Some one was explaining skilfully a piece of music ; some one in dream was praising another's beauty. Different venisons, meat of deer, buffaloes and boars were there in heaps ; in spacious golden dishes were kept untouched meat of cocks, peacocks, roasted deer, bacon seasoned with curd, patridges, kid flesh, well-cooked fish, and lean hare. At another place were to be found delicious drinks, salted soup with a little acid taste, at another place were heaps of fruits and roots. The place of drinking was perfumed with fragrant wreaths all round. There were seats and beds, and the whole place seemed to be ablaze even without fire. At one place garlands were heaped together, there were golden jars, crystal goblets and vases inlaid with gems. All those were full of wine distilled from sugar, honey, flowers and fruits and flavoured with aromatic powder. There were goblets whose contents had been drained to the dregs, some with their quantity left behind, some full of wine quite untouched. All those were arranged according to some custom. There were many beds left vacant. The women were sleeping clasping each other ; one was asleep covering herself with another's cloth. Gentle breeze was blowing by carrying the scent of sandal flowers and of sweet wines.

Hanuman ranged about the whole place, but could not find Janaki there. Hanuman became afraid of incurring sin for seeing those queens of Ravana. "It is surely unrighteous," thought he, "to see another's wife under the influence of sleep. I have never cast my eyes

since my birth on another's wife. Surely I shall be guilty of iniquity for seeing Ravana addicted to others' wives. I have just now seen Ravana's wives dishevelled in sleep, but my mind has not been least stirred by it. It is mind that induces the senses either to virtue or to vice. Besides it was necessary to search for her amongst the women, so I shall not lose my righteousness. I have entered the place with a pure mind. I have seen every corner of the harem, but could not find Janaki anywhere."

Hanuman saw the daughters of the Gods and of the Nagas, but Janaki was not amongst them. Hanuman then left the place.

Then Hanuman thought, "I have searched different places of Lanka, but nowhere could I find the beautiful Janaki. It now appears that the devoted Sita has given up her life. She had been ever jealous for the preservation of her chastity and the wicked Ravana being disappointed for it has put her to death. Ravana's wives are tall, hideous, have spacious mouths, perhaps Janaki has died of fear at their sight. Alas! There is no means of getting her sight now. In vain have I crossed the ocean. The time for search is over, it will now be difficult for me to go back to the irritable Sugriva. All my labours have been in vain.¹ What will the old Jamvuan and Angada say? The allotted time is over, it is better to fast to death. It is not proper to destroy one's self. But perseverance is the root of success. There is pleasure in endeavouring, so I

¹ These lines contradict the foregoing descriptions about their beauty. Which of them are true?

should gather up my energy again. I have searched the drinking hall, picture gallery, flower groves, playground, rooms in the seven-storied buildings, underground cellars, religious edifices, gardens and the passages within the palace. It is now necessary for me to search those places what I have not as yet seen."

Resolving this Hanuman began to range about Lanka. Sometimes he climbed up, sometimes he got down ; at times he stood, at another time he advanced only a few steps ; at one time he shut one door, at another time he uplifted the latch. Thus he did not leave any spot unvisited. He searched every nook and corner. He saw hideous Rakshasis, exquisite Vidyadhari girls of faultless beauty and the daughters of the Nagas with moon-like countenances, but nowhere was Sita to be seen. Then his mind was plunged in grief, and he became anxious, thinking of the Vanaras and of crossing the sea.

CHAPTER X

HANUMAN THINKS AGAIN

Then Hanuman coming out of Ravana's palace proceeded along the city wall with great speed.

Then he mused in his mind : "I have searched every possible place, but couldn't find Janaki, yet Sampati assured me that she must be here. Could that be false ? Ravana has brought her by force and she is now under his power, still it is not likely she has yielded to Ravana. It might be that when out of the fear of Rama's sharp arrows, Ravana in great haste darted towards the sky,

at that moment Sita slipped from his grasp ; or seeing the ocean from the sky she became paralysed with fear and dropped from above as she lay dangling from the car ; or probably she has breathed her last being strangled by the arms of Ravana, or Ravana has made away with her finding her firm for the preservation of her chastity ; or the wicked wives of Ravana have devoured that black-eyed beauty. Alas ! Janaki is no more. Surely, that lotus-eyed dame being unable to bear the pangs of Rama's separation has given up her life brooding over the moon-like countenance of Rama. She has put an end to herself with cries on her lips, "Alack, Rama ! Alas, Lakshmana ! Alas, Ayodhya !" But if she is alive at all, she is like a caged bird weeping incessantly. It is not likely that Janaka's daughter, wife of Rama, will at all submit to Ravana. Now what shall I say to Rama whose very being seems to depend on his wife ? I shall not be able to tell him either that I have not found Janaki, or that I have seen her, or that she is dead. It will be wrong if I say anything like this, and it will be equally unjust if I hold my speech. Alas ! Into what a fix have I fallen due to my ill luck !"

Hanuman again thought, "If I return to Kiskindhya without any information about Janaki, what credit is there ? Crossing this hundred leagues of the ocean is now useless, so also is fruitless this entrance into Lanka, as well as the search among the rovers of the night. I know not what Sugriva will say when I return to Kiskindhya nor what will Rama, Lakshmana and other Vanaras speak. If I tell Rama that I could not find Janaki

anywhere then he will die at that very moment. These are highly cruel words, surely he won't survive their shock. Lakshmana is devoted to his elder brother and he too will surely die. Then Bharata on hearing this sad news will give up his life and Satrugana will follow his steps. Then the worshipful Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra being overwhelmed with grief for the death of their sons will give up their lives. Then Ruma will die in her grief for her husband. Tara is already sad on account of Vali and on the happening of this painful separation with Sugriva she will die and prince Angada on account of the death of his mother and Sugriva will put an end to his existence. Then the Vanaras being overwhelmed with grief for their master will break their heads with their fists and blows. Sugriva ruled over them with magnanimity, equity and honour. Now they will no more dwell in caves, forests and hills, but will die with their wives and children on the plains. Some will starve themselves to death, some will enter into flames, some by hanging, some by poison, and some by weapons. It seems a huge cry will be raised as soon as I shall enter Kiskindhya, so it is not at all proper for me to go now to Kiskindhya. I shall not at any cost return to Sugriva without gathering any information about Sita ; rather if I do not return to Kiskindhya, then the virtuous Rama, Lakshmana and the Vanaras will sustain their lives in hope. So let me reside here under the tree adopting the ascetic tenure of forest-life, feeding upon the fruits that will of their own accord fall upon my head and mouth. Or what is the utility of this life ?

I shall burn myself to ashes by kindling funeral pyre on the sea-shore or shall fast myself to death for deliverance out of this difficulty and after my death, jackals, dogs and ravens will feed upon my flesh, or I shall drown myself in water. Unable to find Sita, my reputation for crossing the sea is vanished for good. Suicide is a great sin. One can enjoy many good things if he preserves his life, so I shall keep my life and surely I shall benefit by it."

Then Hanuman again thought, "I shall destroy mighty Ravana. That villain has abducted Sita and thus I shall avenge myself upon the enemy, or I shall drag him over the sea and offer him to Rama as one presents an animal (for slaughter) to Pasupati. I shall search Lanka again and again till I find out Janaki. If depending on Sampati's words I bring here Rama and if he does not find Janaki then he will scorch us with the flame of his anger. So it is better to live here on frugal diet and by restraining my senses. It is not at all proper to neglect what may ultimately cost the lives of men and the Vanaras. There, at a short distance, I see the Asoka woods, extensive and dense with trees. I have not yet searched that place, I shall now go to it. After bowing down to Vasu, Rudra, Aditya, Vayu and the Aswinis I shall enter the forest. I shall surely return Janaki to Rama, like the spiritual bliss of the saints."

Having thus resolved in his mind, Hanuman stood up and bowed down in his mind to Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva. He then proceeded towards the Asoka forest surveying all sides carefully. He then thought:

"This forest is dense, yet clean. It is full of the Rakshasas, and is ever guarded by them. Even the wind cannot blow hard through that forest. Thus in order to avoid detection by Ravana and for the good of Rama I shall contract my size. May Gods and the Rishis crown me with success. Now let the self-born Brahma, Agni, Vayu, Indra, Varuna, Chandra, Surya, and the Aswini twins bless me with success. Let all beings and the Lord of the beings and other unspecified¹ Gods bless me with success. Alas ! When I shall see that moon-like countenance of Janaki without any stain, with fine nose, white teeth, large eyes and sweet smiles ? Mean, cruel and deceitful Ravana has stealthily carried off that damsel. How shall I find her out ?"

CHAPTER XI

THE ASOKA FOREST

Then Hanuman after a moment's meditation and thinking of Janaki jumped over the wall of the Asoka forest. He saw various trees laden with the fruits and

1 Such sentiments are often the signs of a timid mind afraid of offending an unknown God whom he might omit through his ignorance. Polytheism is apt to breed such a fear even amongst a strong and civilised people, and this reminds us of the famous passage of St. Paul (Chap. 17. v. 23. The Acts). "For as I passed by and behold your devotees I found an altar with this inscription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD whom therefore ye ignorantly worship. Him I declare unto you." Hanuman was educated, so the Greeks were, but sentiment is quite alike, begotten of superstition and fear.

flowers of summer. He saw there Sala, Asoka, Champaka, Uddalaka, Nagkesara, and Mango trees, covered with diverse flowery creepers. Hanuman then leaped into the grove like a discharged arrow. The place was beautiful to see and the trees were bent down with fruit and flowers. It was resonant with the sweet notes of birds, the cries of cuckoos. Everything seemed there to be happy and gay. Hanuman in order to find out Janaki began to rouse the sleeping birds in their nests. By the fluttering of their wings they shook the branches of the trees and flowers of variegated hues began to drop. At that time Hanuman being covered with flowers looked like a hill covered with blossoms. At that sight every one took him to be God of Spring personified. And the whole forest being strewn with flowers, that fell from the trees, appeared beautiful like a well-decorated beauty. Hanuman then began to break down the trees and committed all sorts of violence thereto. Thus the woods came to be divested of fruits and flowers and looked like young beauties with their hair dishevelled, their ornamental paste wiped off, their scarlet lips showing their pearly teeth sucked of their moisture with their tender bodies scratched with nails and teeth! Hanuman in great vehemence scattered leaves and flowers as does the wind in cloudy weather. Hanuman found there beautiful pavements worked with gold and silver and beset with gems. He saw there tanks and ponds filled with crystal water and with golden flights of steps into water.

There the sands were made of pearl-ruby-dusts and

the yard was of crystal ! Golden trees stood on all sides. Lotuses were in bloom and swans were sporting amongst them. Clear streams were flowing there, and flowery groves and grottos covered with creepers stood here and there. At a little distance there stood a tall cliff full of trees. There were marble-houses in different parts, and there a stream falling down from the hill looked like a damsel slipped from her lover's lap ! Its current being interrupted by the bending branches of the trees appeared like an angry woman held by her relations. At a short distance from it there was a tank and deer strayed on its beautiful banks. Beautiful gardens laden with fruits and flowers provided with golden seats and palatial buildings—all built by Viswakarma—adorned the place. At a short distance stood a Sinsapa tree of golden hue. It was full of leaves and was covered with creepers and a golden dais stood at its root. At places stood fine trees of golden hue and they looked like columns of fire, and in their lustre Hanuman thought himself made of gold like the Sumeru hill. The golden tree shaken by the breeze produced a murmuring noise like the tinkling of divine ornaments. It was covered with tender sprouts, buds and blossoms. Hanuman was greatly surprised at the sight.

Hanuman then climbed upon the Sinsapa tree and mused thus : "Perhaps, Janaki with a sad heart is roaming about hither and thither in order to get a sight of Rama. I shall see that poor helpless woman from this tree. This is the beautiful Asoka forest of the wicked Ravana. The queen of Rama must be here. She is an adept in

roaming through forests and this tract is also well-known to her and surely she will soon come here. That chaste damsel is devoted to Rama and is passing her days in sorrow. She will soon arrive here. The denizens of the forest are dear to her, and the time of vespers has also come. Surely she will come to the stream. This forest is a worthy place for her strolling. If she is alive, surely she will come to bathe in this cool stream." Thinking this, Hanuman waited for Sita and being concealed within the leaves of the tree began to survey around.

CHAPTER XII

SITA IN THE ASOKA FOREST

Being hidden in the Sinsapa tree Hanuman began to cast glances all around. The Asoka forest was adorned with the Kalpa-tree; excellent fragrance and juice were ever being emitted from there. That forest was beautified with various things, and it appeared like the Nandana garden. It was interspersed with palaces and was resounded with the sweet notes of the cuckoos and with the shrill cries of the peacocks. The tanks were filled with golden lotuses, and the whole forest shone with a ruddy glow of the Asoka flowers. All sorts of fruits and flowers were available there, and beautiful seats were erected at various places and fine blankets were spread over them. The branches of the trees were covered with the birds that lived there. They were continually flying from one branch to another branch of the tree, and thus being covered with blossoms they appeared quite charming. The branches of the Asoka

were covered with blossoms and the Karnikaras were kissing under the weight of flowers. The whole forest seemed to be ablaze with their red tint. There were Punnaga, Saptaparna, Champaka and Uddalaka trees. There were numerous Asoka trees in the forest, some were of golden hue, some were flaming like fire, and some were of deep collyrium hue. That Asoka forest was more beautiful than the Nandana garden and the Chaitraratha woods of Kuvera. It may be compared with a second sky, and the flowers there shone like planets and stars, or it might be said to be the fifth ocean with its flowers for the gems! Various kinds of sweet smell were there as in the Himalayas, or in the Gandhamadan. At a short distance, there stood a coral palace white as the Kailasa mountain, and resting on a thousand pillars. Its stairs were made of coral, and its daises of gold. There was ever bright sheen and its height reached the sky.

"The heroic Hanuman all on a sudden espied a woman lean with fasting and surrounded by the Rakshasis on all sides, and she was continually heaving heavy sighs. She could be recognised with very great difficulty and by inference only; she was spotless like the newly risen moon, like unto a flame enveloped in smoke; she was devoid of all ornaments, she wore a single piece of dirty yellow cloth. She looked like the Goddess Lakshmi without the lotus. Racked with grief, the chaste lady looked like the star Rohini under the grip of Ketu. It seemed she was brooding over something, even thinking of some person in her mind. Tears were flowing

down her cheeks. There was not a single affectionate soul near about her, but the Rakshasis all round. At that time she appeared like a stray hind surrounded by the dogs. Her hair gathered in a single braid was hanging on her back like a huge snake. She looked pretty like the earth spotted with green vegetation after the rains!

Hanuman knew her to be Sita from the instructions he formerly received. He thought, "She looks exactly like her whom I saw being carried off by Ravana."

Janaki's face was beautiful like the full moon, her bust lovely and round. She illumined the darkness of the place by the radiance of her beauty. Her throat was of lustrous cream colour, her lips scarlet like the ripe Bimba, her waist lean, and her features superbly graceful. She was pleasing to the world like the full moon. She was seated on the ground like an ascetic woman devoted to penance and was occasionally heaving heavy sighs. Emaciated with grief her beauty waned and she looked wretched like Smriti¹ clouded with doubts, like reduced wealth, lost respect, like success attended with failures, like hope without any object of desire, like sullied intelligence or fame spoiled with false rumours. She was sad for absence of Rama and was oppressed by the tyranny of the Rakshasis. She was casting restless glances all around. Her face was dark with sorrow and bathed in tears and her black eyes and lashes were wet. She looked like the moon enveloped in deep blue clouds.

1 Consists of Shastric rules for rituals and also for social and political conduct.—Translator.

Hanuman was greatly perplexed with her sight. Then Janaki was difficult to his comprehension like a forgotten piece of knowledge, or like words having different meanings yet not governed by any grammar. Hanumar seeing that faultless daughter of the king thus debated in his mind :

"The ornaments mentioned by Rama are on her person. I find on her ears excellent ear-rings and Trikarnas, and ornaments of coral on her arms, stained by the constant contact of her body. However these are the ornaments spoken of by Rama, and I see them all except that which she threw down on the Rishyamuka mountain. This woman formerly threw down her ornaments with a jingling sound and the Vanaras found a yellow scarf fallen from this lady attached to a tree. Janaki has been wearing this single piece of yellow cloth from a long time ; it has become stained with dirt, but it is beautiful as that scarf was made of golden texture. This golden beauty is the darling of Rama. Though now far off, yet she is still living in his mind. On account of her separation, grief, liberality and passion have alternately taken possession of Rama's mind. He felt pity for being unable to protect his wife in a critical moment ; liberality from the thought that proper treatment has not been accorded to those who have asked for his protection, and grief for the separation of his wife, and passion for his darling being distant from him. This lady is as beautiful as Rama, so she must be his spouse. There can't be any doubt about it. Her mind is fixed upon Rama so is that of Rama upon her. That is why Rama is still

alive otherwise he would not have survived a moment. It is indeed a great thing that he has not been completely swept away by grief for this lady, but somehow he has managed to maintain his mortal frame. It is indeed arduous."

Hanuman was greatly delighted at the sight of Sita and praised Rama again and again in his mind, and after a minute's thought he began to lament with tearful eyes, "None can override destiny." Janaki is the wife of the elder brother of the cultured Lakshmana and is an object of his respect, but she has been smitten with sorrow. Janaki is fully aware of the prowess of Rama and Lakshmana ; she is therefore calmly waiting without restlessness like the full current of the Ganges at the advent of the rains. Her pedigree, her rank, her age is worthy of Rama, so it is only meet that they should thus be attached towards each other. For this large-eyed Janaki Vali and Kavandha have died and Rama killed Viradha. For her Khara, Dushana, Trishira, have died with fourteen thousand Rakshasas in Janasthana. For her, famous Sugriva has obtained the Vanara kingdom from Vali and it is for her that I have crossed the sea and have visited this city of Lanka. Now it seems that it would not be improper for Rama if he destroys not only the earth but the whole universe for her.¹ On the one hand that world and on

1 It is common to compare the Iliad with the Ramayana though the characters are widely divergent, but one line from Homer may be quoted here when the Trojan Senate resolved to continue the war exclaiming, "O she is

the other Janaki, but the whole world is not worth a hundredth part of Janaki. The damsel is the daughter of the royal saint Janaka, and she rose out of the earth at the time covered with ruby-like dusts of ploughing the ground for sacrifice. She is the daughter-in-law of the mighty Dasaratha, devoted wife of virtuous Rama, and she has renounced all enjoyment and endured the hardships of forest-life out of her devotion to her husband. Alas! she who for her devotion towards her husband sustained her life on fruits and roots and treated the forest as her own house is undergoing such sufferings now! As a man sorely oppressed with thirst pants for the tank, so Rama has been eager for her sight. And as a king deprived of his throne becomes delighted at the restoration of his kingdom, so he will be mightily pleased after getting her. This Janaki is now devoid of friends. Deprived of enjoyments she is sustaining her life only in the hope of getting back Rama. She is not looking to the Rakshasis, not to these flowers and fruits, but she is ever thinking of Rama in her heart. The husband enhances the beauty of a woman more than her ornaments, and now in his absence she appears lustreless. Seeing this black-haired beauty smitten with grief myself too have been greatly mortified at heart. She, who in forgiveness is like the earth, and who was protected by Rama and Lakshmana, alas, is now surrounded by the Rakshasis under the tree. Janaki is smitten with

worth the trouble." Sita was not less fair than the famous daughters of Zeus—Translator.

grief and she appears wretched like a lotus destroyed by frost. She is like a Chakravaki bird being separated from her mate. These Asokas with their abundance of flowers are scorching her heart with grief like the rays of the blazing sun.¹"

CHAPTER XIII

SITA IN ASOKA FOREST

Thus passed one day, and again came the night and the white moon ascended the sky, like a swan floating in the blue waters and it cast its beams as if to help Hanuman. The moon delighted Hanuman with its gentle and soothing rays. At that Janaki of moon-like countenance was immersed in grief like a craft sunk with heavy load. At a short distance from her there were a number of hideous-looking Rakshasis; some of them had only one eye, someone ear, some with large ears, some with upturned nose, some with long and thin necks, someone's hair was dishevelled; someone was all covered with hair, as if wrapped in a blanket; some had spacious foreheads, some had long faces and protruding bellies; some were tall, some were dwarfish, and some were hump-backed; some had yellow eyes; some had hideous grimaces; some were brown; some were black; some were angry and some were quarrelsome. Some had lances, some were armed with clubs, and others had subtle weapons; the faces of some of

1 Red flowers compared to the rays.—Translator.

them bore resemblances to those of tigers, jackals, deer and buffaloes. Someone had her mouth set on her breast. Someone's feet were like those of a cow, someone's like the elephant, someone's like the hoofs of the horse's hoofs, while another had of a camel ; some had one leg ; some had one arm ; someone's ears were like asses' ears, some had the dog's ears, some like those of an elephant ; some like those of a bull and someone like of those of a lion. Some Rakshasi's nose was long and crooked ; someone's like the trunk of an elephant while some were without noses.¹ Some Rakshasi's hair was kissing her feet, someone's hair was iron grey and rough, someone had a long protruding tongue. They always drank wine. They were extremely fond of wine, meat and blood.

Hanuman saw these formidable Rakshasis. They stood surrounding the Sinsapa tree. At the bottom of the tree sat Janaki, wan with sorrow and her dusty hairs were scattered round her. She looked like a star dropped on earth on the wane of its virtue. The sight of her husband was beyond her reach, but by her devotion she had gained world reputation. Her whole body was devoid of ornaments, yet she shone in the lustre of her love for her husband. There was no friend or relation by her ; she was confined by Ravana in the Asoka forest and she appeared like a young elephant, astray from the herd, surrounded by the lionesses. She looked

1 It is difficult to reconcile these descriptions with the former account of Ravana's palace.—Translator.

like the crescent of the autumnal sky covered with clouds; she was tainted with dirt like the lotus soiled with mud. She looked miserable and sad, but spirited, sustained, rather undaunted by the memory of her husband. Her chastity was protecting her all through. She cast furtive glances around her like a frightened deer, her sights seemed to scorch the trees with their leaves and flowers. She looked like Sorrow's self, like a wave in the ocean of grief. She looked extremely beautiful even without any decoration. Her features were developed, but lean with grief. She looked like a flowery creeper divested of the wealth of flowers. Hanuman could not restrain his tears at finding her out (at last). He again and again bowed to Rama and Lakshmana in his thought and remained concealed behind the leafy screen of the Sinsapa tree.

CHAPTER XIV

RAVANA APPROACHES SITA

It was the small hours of the night and at the end of the night Brahmins versed in the Vedas and sacrifices and conversant with the six¹ branches of the Vedas began to chant the Vedas. Sweet and auspicious music rose, and the mighty Ravana awoke from sleep. His garland was torn and his cloth was loose. After rising from the bed Ravana began to think of Janaki. His

1 Six branches are :—Grammar, prosody, astronomy, pronunciation, interpretation of uncommon terms and the rituals.—Translator.

mind was fixed upon Janaki, and then it was difficult for him to control surging his amorous passion.

Then Ravana proceeded towards the Asoka forest surveying the rows of trees. There the trees were bent down with fruits and flowers and birds were singing sweetly over them. The bottom of the trees were covered with flowers dropped from the trees, and deer were straying amongst them. The Rakshasa King Ravana was smitten with Cupid. As the nymphs and daughters of the Gods and the Gandharvas follow Indra, so a number of beauties followed Ravana's traces. Some of them held golden lamps in their hands; some held chowris, palmyra-fans, some carried pitchers filled with sweet perfumed water, some jewelled vessels filled with wine, some white umbrella with golden staff and some circular of gold. As lightings follow the cloud, so a number of Ravana's queens followed him out of deep attachment and love. Their necklaces and garlands were a bit faded and their cosmetics gone, their hair was dishevelled, their eyes were sleepy and revolving under the influence of liquor. Beads of perspiration stood on their lotus-like faces, and their glances were quite infatuating. The passionate Ravana was slowly advancing thinking of Janaki

Hanuman then heard the jingling sounds of the anklets and bracelets, and so Ravana also of unthinkable prowess standing at the gate of the Asoka woods. A number of bright lamps fed by scented oil were before him. He was almost overwhelmed with pride, passion and wine. His eyes were red and were looking askance. He looked like Cupid himself, (though) he had no bow

and arrow in his hand. A milk-white scented scarf, perfumed with the fragrance of flowers, was slipping off from his shoulders from time to time down to his waist and Ravana adjusted it to its proper place. Hanuman then leaning against a branch of the Sinsapa tree saw Ravana slowly coming near. He became anxious to study the person. Ravana had a retinue of youthful beauties, and with them he entered the Asoka garden, a fit place for women. There was a female warder named Sankukarna, intoxicated with liquor and adorned with ornaments. Hanuman saw Ravana surrounded by the beauties like the moon encircled by a galaxy of stars. So long Hanuman could not recognise him. Now, he could know him to be Ravana. "He is the hero," thought he, "whom I saw sleeping in the beautiful hall." He climbed on the top of the tree, for he could then hardly bear the effulgence of Ravana. Hanuman remained concealed behind the leaves and branches of the Sinsapa tree. In the meantime, Ravana desirous of seeing Sita came near her.

Thereupon, Janaki at the sight of Ravana began to tremble with fear, like a plantain-leaf shaken by the breeze. Sita then sat silent, covering her belly with her thighs, and her breasts with her hands. She was overwhelmed with sufferings and grief.

On approaching, Ravana found her like a broken raft overwhelmed in the sea. She was seated on the ground, like a branch felled down by an axe. Being stained with dust particles, she looked like a lotus stained with mud. She was wan with grief, and was conti-

nually shedding tears. She only wished for Ravana's death and her mind, in her thought, flew to Rama, as if, riding on the wings of her resolution. She was devoted to Rama and she saw no limits to her sufferings. At that time she looked like a snake writhing in the dust under the influence of a charm.

She was miserable like the star Rohini oppressed by the comet. She was born of a highly respectable family, but from her dress she seemed to be a low-born one. Then the princess appeared like a dying flame, like slighted respect, like disappointed hope, like a disobeyed mandate, like weak intellect, like the horizon blazing up with a sudden eruption, like worship interrupted by accidents, like a faded lotus, like an army without a leader, like the sun covered in darkness, like an altar trampled upon, and like an extinguished flame. She was dark with sorrow and looked like the full moon under the jaws of Rahu. She was like a torn leaf, and wretched like a lotus without the bees. She appeared like a stream diverted and dried up having met with obstruction in its course. She was in extreme distress on account of her husband's absence and looked gloomy like dark night. She was tender and graceful and was accustomed to live in jewelled rooms. She was pale like a recently plucked lotus scorched by heat. She was like a young elephant captured and tied up to a post. A long braid of hair hung on her back, like the dark blue skirt of an autumnal forest. She was greatly emaciated in grief. But her beauty shone though thus neglected. Her heart was full of

misgivings and anxieties, she was in extreme distress and was praying with folded palms for Ravana's death. Her eyes were slightly red with anger and their ends were white, and she was repeatedly looking round with tearful eyes.

CHAPTER XV

RAVANA'S SPEECH

Then Ravana began to seduce Janaki with sweet words, "O my beauty, with thighs like the trunk of an elephant, you have concealed your breasts and belly at my sight, out of fear. O my large-eyed beauty, I am yearning for your love, please respect my love. In this Asoka forest there is no man or Rakshasa, so remove all fear about any other male person. It is Rakshasa's nature to ravish another's wife and to carry away another's wife by force, but since you are unwilling I have not touched your person. However much may I now be smitten by the God of love, I shall not behave otherwise. O worshipful lady, depend on me, don't be afraid, you should have regard for me and don't be overwhelmed with grief. To wear a single braid of lock, to lie on the ground, to fast, and to put on a dirty piece of linen are not worthy of you. Enjoy yourself by showing your attachment for me. Put on beautiful garlands, excellent apparel, fine jewellery and decorate yourself. Pass your time pleasantly in dancing, singing and drinking. You are a gem of a woman. Don't give up all desire for decoration ; deco-

rate yourself up to your taste, and ask for my love. You must not remain unadorned in any way. The beauty of your youth is imperceptibly passing away, and once it is gone like the onward current of a river, it will never return. It seems that, the Creator of beauty after creating thee has ceased from his work ; so I do not find anything like your beauty on earth. You are young and beautiful. Even the mind of Brahma, the grandsire of creation, is stirred up by your beauty. To tell you the truth, I cannot draw away my eyes from whatever limbs of yours they might light upon. Shake off your perverseness. There are many beauties in my palace,—be queen over all. I confer on you all the wealth I have secured by my prowess and my vast kingdom on earth ; live as my wife. You see there is no match for me in the three worlds. O my Goddess, just listen to the account of my prowess. At one time, all Gods and Asuras combined could not withstand my prowess on the field of battle. I cut down their flag-staffs repeatedly. O my beauty, be attached to me and decorate your person. Let me once see you well-dressed. Just condescend, out of pity towards me, to things of luxury, to food and drink. There is immense wealth and vast kingdoms under me. Please distribute them as you wish. Be attached to me without any fear, and command this impertinent self. My darling, you see with your own eyes my riches, what will you do with poor Rama clad in rags ? He has lost his beauty and is now meandering in the forest. Victory in war is out of question in his case. He sleeps on the

ground and is devoted to observances of rites. I am afraid whether he is still alive or not. Even if he be living, not to speak of union, he will not have even the opportunity of seeing you. How a crane will ever have a glimpse of the moon-beam hidden behind the clouds? Hiranyakashipu got his wife from Indra, but Rama will never get you back from my hands. O my beauty, thou hast stolen my mind. I have no more attachment for my wives seeing you even clad in dirty silk, devoid of ornaments and lean with fasting. Be queen over the accomplished beauties that are in my palace. As the nymphs attend upon the Goddess of beauty, so these world-renowned beauties will wait upon your pleasure. O my beauty, with charming brows and well-developed hips, do thou enjoy all the wealth of Kuvera, the lord of the Yakshas, and the seven worlds along with me. O my Goddess, in prowess, wealth, and fame Rama is not equal to me. Be then merry and help yourself with food and drink. I shall confer on you the whole world. Do thou gratify my wishes, and your friend will be satisfied with you. O my timid lady, adorned with golden necklace, range with me in the beautiful forest skirting the shore of the sea.

CHAPTER XVI

SITA'S REPLY

Hearing these words of the haughty Ravana, Sita trembled in fear and began to shed incessant tears. Rama was uppermost in her thoughts; by placing a

blade of grass between her and Ravana she piteously began, "Don't hanker after me. Be attached to your own wives. I am as inaccessible to you, as salvation to a sinner. Touch of a third person is highly reprehensible for a devoted wife. I am born of a high family and have been married to a respectable man. How can I agree to this (proposal) ?"

Janaki then turning her back against Ravana, resumed :

"You see, I am another person's wife and am chaste. Don't take me for a common woman. Have regard for virtue and be upright. O Rakshasa, another's wife should be protected like one's own wife : and being mindful of your life be attached to your own wives. The man who is not content with his own wife, is a slave of his senses and meets with insult from another's wife, and his friends and relations too condemn his conduct. When your intelligence is so perverse, it seems there is no good man in Lanka. Or if there were any, you never cared to mix with them ; or whatever good advice they might have given you, you have neglected them thinking them to be useless, for the destruction of the Rakshasa clan. Royal splendour soon vanishes at the hands of a vicious and foolish king. For your own fault the rich city of Lanka will soon be reduced to ruins. Even one feels glad when a wicked person meets with his end, so many will exclaim in your distress, 'Happily dissolution has overtaken the wicked.'

"Ravana, as light is to the sun, so I belong to

Rama. So do not attempt to tempt me by display of pomp and riches. Having once made the arm of that lord of men as my pillow, how can I rest my head on another's arm? Like unto that knowledge of Brahma of a devout Brahmin, I belong to that royal saint, cognisant of the higher truths of the world. It behoves you to take me to Rama. If you are anxious for the splendour of Lanka, if you wish to live with your family and dependents, then make friends with Rama, ever kind to them who seek his protection. If you return me to him, then and then alone it will be good for you or great disaster is sure to follow. Thou might not be destroyed by the thunderbolt. Death might have spared you for good, but there is no escape from the hands of that prince of men. You will soon hear the deep rumbling sound of the twanging of the dreadful bow of Rama, like that of the thunderbolt. Soon, Rama's arrows engraved with his name will with great speed, fall upon Lanka. Those shafts adorned with Kanka feathers will cover this place and destroy the Rakshasas. As Vamana rescued the glory of the Gods from the grip of the Asuras, so Rama will soon rescue me from your hands. You see Janasthana has been made desolate. Rakshasas have been destroyed. What you have committed is already too bad. That hero went for hunting and with that prince of men went his brother to capture deer in the forest, and thou hast stolen me away from the empty hermitage. You have committed a nefarious act. And like unto a dog incapable of facing a tiger, you would have surely run away at their sight.

You will share the same fate as Vritra Asura did, who fought with one hand against Indra with two hands, and was defeated. Your wealth and resources will be of no avail when thou hast contracted enmity with Rama. As it is easy for the sun to dry up a bubble of water, so it is easy for my husband to take away your life. Whether you repair to the Kailasa, or enter the nether region, there is no escape from Rama's hand, like a tree singed by the thunderbolt."

CHAPTER XVII

RAVANA'S REPLY

Ravana then replied to Janaki's harsh words, "Janaki! a man becomes dear to a woman in proportion he courts her, but you have insulted me as much as I courted you. As a cunning driver controls the wayward horse, so amour for you has checked my wrath. In fact, Love is hostile, for whatever woman it craves it creates pity and affection for her. O my beauty, you have grown unkind to me just for nothing. You are fit to be insulted, nay even to be punished with death, but love has dissuaded me from all that, though you deserve death-sentence immediately for all the harsh words you have just now spoken."

Ravana again resumed with anger, "You see, I shall wait for another two months according to the pledge, after which you will have to share my bed. If in the meantime you do not change your mind, my cooks will carve you into pieces for my breakfast."

At this, the wives of the Gods and the Gandharvas were greatly sorry and they consoled her with their silent gestures by their eyes and lips.

Then Janaki collecting herself a little began to speak, being inspired by the spirit of her devotion and by the heroism of her husband, "O, thou mean fellow, perhaps there is none in this city who wishes you good, or he would have certainly dissuaded you from such a vile deed. Like Sachi to Indra I belong to pious Rama, and none but you in the three worlds ever ventured to indulge about me even in thoughts. How will you be saved for the sinful words just uttered by you? Rama is like a proud tusker, and you are like a hare, so you will certainly be vanquished in battle. Don't you feel ashamed to rail against Rama in his absence? You are staring at me with lustful eyes, and these fell eyes of yours will surely fall to ground. I am Rama's wife and daughter-in-law of Dasaratha. Strange that your tongue has not yet been scorched in uttering these words to me. By the fire of my chastity I can even now reduce you into ashes, but for ascetic observances and for Rama's permission, I have not done it yet. You will never succeed in keeping me secretly, or the act of abduction secret; what thou hast done is enough for your death. Thou art Kuvera's brother and a warrior, why didst thou then first remove Rama by the magic of Maricha and then steal away his wife?"

Then Ravana rolling his cruel eyes, looked at Sita. His body was like a mass of dark clouds, his arms were mighty, high was his neck, tongue flaming, and eyes

grim. His strength and courage were like that of a lion, and gait slow. He was adorned with a red garland and clad in a red cloth. He had gold bracelets in his arms, trembling diadem on his head, and a golden zone round his waist. With that he appeared like the Mandara Hill girdled by snakes at the time of the churning of the ocean. With his jewelled ear-rings he looked like a flaming hill adorned with the red Asokas ! He was like the Kalpa-tree, or like the spring incarnate. He looked terrible, albeit adorned like a chaitya¹ in the cremation-ground. His eyes were red with anger and he was breathing like a snake. There were angry frowns on his brow and he said casting his eyes on Janaki, "Thou art wicked, thou hast no sense of good or evil. I shall immediately destroy you, as the sun does with darkness."

Saying this, Ravana cast his glance towards the hideous Rakshasis. There stood many of them. Ravana addressing them said, "O Rakshasis, just devise means either jointly or separately so that Janaki may soon be addicted to me. Do it by good or bad conduct, by conciliation or repression, by threat or by blandishment."

Ravana repeatedly gave them these directions, and thundered at Janaki with anger and amour.

In the meantime, a Rakshasi named Dhanyamalini approached Ravana and embracing him said, "Do thou sport with me. What will you do with that wretched and pale woman ? You see, Gods have not ordained

¹ A cenotaph, a monument raised on the site of funeral pyre.—Translator.

enjoyment to her luck. This woman is foolish. I am burning with desire seeing you courting her. Highest pleasure ensues from receiving a willing woman."

Thus Dhanyamalini took away Ravana by the amorous force. Ravana too refrained at once with smiles, and being surrounded by women he left the place shaking the earth by his firm treads.

CHAPTER XVIII

PERSUASIONS

After Ravana entered the palace, the Rakshasis came near Sita and began to speak harsh words in anger, "Janaki, through your stupidity you do not realise the glory of being the wife of the great Ravana born of the Pulasthya line." Then a Rakshasi named Ekajata angrily said, "You see, Pulasthya was the fourth of the six Prajapatis, the mind-born sons of Brahma. Sage Viswasrava is the mind-born son of that saint Pulasthya, and mighty Ravana is born of that Viwasrava. Be now the wife of Ravana. Why do you disbelieve my words?"

Then a Rakshasi called Harijata rolling her cat-like brown eyes angrily, said, "Ask for the love of Ravana who has conquered Indra by his might. Why hast thou no love for that mighty hero, skilled in battle? Emperor Ravana will attend on you, renouncing his dearest queen, Mandodari. He will come to you by discarding his jewelled chamber full of beauties."

Then another Rakshasi named Vikata said, "Look, he was by your side, who has repeatedly conquered the

Nagas, Gandharvas and the Danavas. Ah fool ! Why don't you wish to be Ravana's wife ?"

Then Drumukhi said, "Why do you not wish to be the wife of Ravana, the king of kings, in whose fear the sun withholds his heat, the wind does not venture to blow, and the trees shower flowers, and at whose desire even the clouds rain. Janaki ! It is for your good that I am saying this. Listen to my words, or you shall die."

Then those terrible Rakshasis began to pester Sita again with unpleasant words, "O Sita, why dost thou not like to live in the beautiful palace of Ravana abounding in costly beds ? You are a human being and consider it as something great to be the wife of a man. Do thou turn from Rama or your desire will never be fulfilled. Rama has lost his kingdom, he is wretched and disappointed, so turn thy mind from Rama. Ravana is enjoying all the riches of the world, do thou spend thy time happily with him, and enjoy yourself to your heart's desire."

Then Janaki with tearful eyes replied, "You have persuaded me to give myself up to another person. This sinful proposal will never find any place in my heart. How can a woman be the wife of a Rakshasa ? Rather devour me,—I shall never be able to accede to your requests. My husband is Rama, whether he be poor, or devoid of kingdom, he is worshipful to me. I am ever attached to Rama, as Subarchala¹ to the sun, Like unto Sachi to Indra, Arundhati to Vasishtha, Rohini to the

1 Sun's wife—Translator.

Moon, Lopamudra to Agastya, Sukanya to Chyavana, Savitri to Satyavan, Sreemati to Kapila, Damayanti to Nala, I am ever devoted to Rama."

Hearing these words of Janaki, all the Rakshasis were beside themselves in rage and covered her with cruel reproaches. All along, Hanuman sat speechless on the Sinsapa tree, and he heard all their words. Janaki was trembling with fear and the Rakshasis surrounding her reproached her severely, and began to lick their lips with their fiery tongues. "Fetch the axe quickly. She is not worthy of the royal Ravana." These words they uttered repeatedly.

Janaki then wiping her eyes with the end of her cloth sat at the foot of the Sinsapa tree. Then the Rakshasis surrounded her again. Amongst them there was a grim-looking Rakshasi, who said to Janaki, "You have shown sufficient proofs of your love for your husband. It is more than enough. Too much of it will be the cause of your miseries. I have been greatly pleased with you. May you be happy. You have done the duty of a human being. But now listen to my words. The Rakshasa chief Ravana is liberal, sweet-speeched, kind and mighty, give up your love for a puny man and be devoted to him. Put on excellent apparel and fine jewellery, be the queen over all like Sachi and Swaha.¹ What will you gain by getting the poor and weak Rama? But if you do not follow my words, I will devour you immediately."

¹ Wife of Fire, Goddess presiding over the sacrificial offering of a Vedic deity.—Translator.

Then Vikata with hanging breasts, raising her fist in anger said, "Janaki ! It is out of compassion and courtesy that we have endured all your harsh words, but it will do you no good if you do not act up to our words. Thou hast been brought here on the other side of the sea, difficult of being approached by others. Thou art, O Maithili, within the abode of Ravana and imprisoned in the Asoka forest and guarded by us all. Even Indra cannot rescue you. Do thou, therefore, hear my well-meaning words. Why do you shed tears ? Abandon your useless grief. Be happy and cheerful, renouncing your persistent melancholy. Do thou enjoy yourself at your pleasure with Ravana. O my timid damsel, thou knowest how transient is the beauty of a woman. And so long thy youth does not wither, pass your time happily. O fair damsel, roam in this fair garden over the hill, and other picturesque places happily with Ravana. Wish for Ravana, and troop of women will wait upon you. If you do not pay heed to my words, I will pluck out your heart."

Then Chandadari of hideous look brandished a formidable lance and said that she would devour her by tearing her to pieces. Then Proghasa said, "Why are we sitting idle ? Let us strangle this cruel woman to death, and then report the king about her death. He will, thereupon, surely ask us to devour her."

Then Ajamukhi said, "Let us kill the woman and divide meat equally. I don't like to bandy useless words. Just fetch water and garlands." Then Surpanakha said, "What Ajamukhi has said is right. This is also my own

view. Fetch wine, the balm of all sorrows—we shall dance before queen Nikumbhila after partaking of human flesh ”

Then the nymph-like Sita began to weep hearing these cruel words.

CHAPTER XIX

LAMENTATION OF SITA

Then Sita being greatly frightened, choked with tears said, “You see, I am a woman, how can I be the wife of a Rakshasa ? Rather you eat me up, there will be no harm then, but I won't be able to accede to your word.”

Janaki was surrounded by the Rakshasis on all sides and was trembling with fear as if she was sinking within herself. She was overwhelmed like a strayed fawn pursued by a tiger. Her mind was restless at their oppression. Supporting herself with help of a flowery bough of a Sinsapa tree, she began to think of Rama. Her tears bathed her breasts. How could she find consolation ? She did not find any end to her miseries. Her face was darkened with grief, and was ever trembling like a plantain-leaf. A long braid of hair hung on her back and due to her trembling it swung like a snake. She was almost-senseless with grief, and was breathing heavily. And she began to cry saying, “Alas, Rama ! Alack, Lakshmana ! Ah, Kausalya ! Ah, Sumitra ! Now I find the adage to be true that death never visits a man or woman before the appointed time or how could I sur-

vive these oppressions of the Rakshasis in absence of Rama? I am most unfortunate and am overwhelmed in ruin like laden cargo sunk by storm in the sea. Now I am under the sway of the Rakshasis and I cannot see Rama, so sorrow is consuming me up like the bank of a river off by the current. The blessed and the virtuous people are having sight of the lotus-eyed Rama. In absence of Rama it seems I am being consumed by a virulent poison. I know not what a heinous sin I did commit in my previous birth, that I am undergoing such terrible sufferings now. Woe unto this human existence, woe unto subjection, I shall give up my life."

Janaki seemed to be crazed with grief. She threw the dust like a tired mare. Her eyes were full of tears and she cried incessantly with a downcast face. "Alas ! Rama was bewitched by Maricha's magic and Ravana carried me off by force in that opportune moment. I am now suffering immensely at the hands of the Rakshasis from their taunts and threats. What is the good of this life to suffer so much in the absence of Rama? What is the use of wealth or ornaments? It seems my heart is made of adamant and it is indestructible, hence it has not been broken yet in the absence of Rama. I am not a non-Aryan, low-born and unchaste. Shame to me that I am still alive even for a moment in the absence of Rama. What to speak of desiring Ravana, I shall not touch him even by my mean foot. This villain seems to be quite unconscious of the dignity of his birth and is quite indifferent about my refusal. He is of a cruel nature and he is now courting me through others. You may tear me from

limb to limb and burn me in fire. I shall never yield to Ravana. Rama is kind-hearted, gentle and wise, and it is due to my bad luck that he has grown unkind. Why doesn't he, who has slain fourteen thousand Rakshasas in Janasthana come to me? The powerless Ravana has confined me there. Rama can easily destroy him in battle. Why does he not set me free who slew Viradha in the Dandaka forest? This city of Lanka is girt by the sea on all sides; it is inaccessible to others, but Rama's shafts can penetrate everywhere, surely they will never be thwarted here. I am Rama's beloved wife—dear as his life, Ravana has carried me off by force. I know not why Rama is sitting idle without making any search for me. Perhaps he is not aware that I am here. Had he any knowledge of it, I would not brook this insult. Alas, one who could have informed him about this abduction is dead—Ravana has killed him.¹ Jatayu was old yet he bravely fought for me. If he could know that I am imprisoned here he would have certainly destroyed all the Rakshasas of the three worlds, would have reduced Lanka into ruins and would have dried up the sea and demolished all the glories of Ravana. As I am crying now, in every home husbandless Rakshasis would have wept like me. Then heroic Rama with Lakshmana would have so chastised the Rakshasas that none would have survived if one came before their eyes. The streets of Lanka will soon be dark with the smoke of the funeral

¹ The recital of these previous events are evidently calculated to enable Hanuman to recognise her beyond doubt of Sita.—Translator.

pyres and will be infested with vultures. The city will be turned into a vast cremation-ground and my wishes will be fulfilled. Don't think that my words are unfounded, but disaster will visit you due to your bad luck. Various evil omens are now to be seen in Lanka, and it will soon lose its splendour. After the destruction of Ravana, the city of Lanka will wither away like a widow. Various festivities are now being held in the city, but it will soon grow desolate, and I shall hear the bitter cries of the Rakshasis from every house. If Rama can anyhow come to know that I am here, his arrows will tear it into pieces and envelop it in darkness, and none of the Rakshasa family will survive. The time allotted to the cruel Ravana is about to expire, and my end also is near. The Rakshasas are vicious and have no conscience and I shall have surely to meet death at their hands. The wicked people feeding on flesh do not care for virtue, but they will court great disaster by their vices. I am now a meal for their breakfast, but alas ! I shall not meet Rama at the time of death. And how shall I give up my life without seeing Rama ? Perhaps Rama does not know that I am still alive, or he would have searched the whole world for me, or it might be that he has renounced his life in my sorrow. Blessed are they who have seen Rama. Virtue is the goal of the intelligent and ascetic Rama, so there is no need of a wife, so he is not looking for me. There is an adage, *viz.*, 'out of sight out of mind', but this applies to the ungrateful wretches and not to Rama. Since I have lost his love, it is possible that I

have committed some wrong, or my luck is quite adverse. Whatever it might be, there is no more any use of my life. Perhaps those two brothers by renouncing their arms, are now roaming through the forest sustaining themselves on fruit and roots or the wicked Ravana has by his wiles put them to death. Death is now desirable to me, but death won't befall me even in such miseries. Blessed are the devotees and saints who are never agitated with sorrows or joys. I have lost love of Rama, and have come under the grip of Ravana. It is therefore better for me to die."

CHAPTER XX

DREAMS OF RAKSHASI TRIJATA

Then the Rakshasis were greatly enraged at these words of Janaki and some of them left the place in order to inform Ravana of these things, while others approaching Janaki said in a rude tone, "Ah, Non-Aryan! Wait for a month and we shall tear you to pieces in great delight."

In the meantime, an old Rakshasi named Trijata being roused from sleep came there and threatening them said, "You see, Janaki is the daughter of Janaka and daughter-in-law of Dasaratha; instead of tearing her to pieces, do ye devour one another. At the end of this night I had a dreadful dream. I think the Rakshasa king Ravana will be destroyed with all his family."

Thereupon, the Rakshasis were greatly frightened hearing of Trijata's fearful dream, and they asked, "Tell us what kind of dream thou didst dream this night."

Trijata replied, "I dreamed as if Rama wearing a piece of white cloth and putting on a white garland, had ascended, with Lakshmana, the *Vimana* chariot, made of ivory that plied through the sky. Thousands of steeds were carrying him away. At that time Janaki, clad in a white robe, was seated on a cliff surrounded by the sea ; and as light merges into the sun, so she was united with Rama. I saw again Rama along with Lakshmana was riding on a terrible tusker. They were glowing with their energy like the effulgent sun, and they came near Janaki, clad in white apparel. I saw Rama taking an elephant from that hill and Janaki from his lap ascended upon it. She was about to reach the sun and the moon with her own hands, and Rama and Lakshmana were seated on an elephant high over Lanka. Rama arrived with Lakshmana in a fine chariot drawn by eight white bulls, and went towards the north with Sita riding upon the exceedingly bright Pushpakaratha. I saw Ravana with his head shaved and besmeared with oil, and he was drinking wine in mad excitement. He had a red cloth on his person, and a garland of Karavi on his neck. Being ejected from the Pushpakaratha he was roaming in the forest. I saw him again, he was then robed in black, he had a red garland on his neck, red sandal-paste on his person and a woman was dragging him by force. He was seated upon a chariot drawn by asses and his mind was unhinged. At times he was laughing, at times he was dancing, and at times he was drinking oil. Riding upon the ass he was proceeding

towards the south.¹ At one place, I saw him tumbled headlong from the ass on the ground and then again he got upon it with care. He had no cloth on his loins, and his tongue was full of foul words, and he soon fell into a dark, filthy and highly stinking pit and thence proceeding towards the south entered into a white lake. I further saw a dark woman clad in red and stained with mud appearing before him and she was dragging him towards the north by a piece of rope tied round his neck. Saw I further Kumbhakarna, Indrajit and other heroes who had their heads shaved and were quaffing oil.² I saw Ravana proceeding towards the south on the back of a boar, Indrajit on the back of a porpoise and Kumbhakarna on a camel's back. But I saw Vibhishana alone with a white umbrella and four ministers with him. A well-decorated assembly-hall stood open before him and music swelled from there. I saw again the gate of Lanka broken, and the city sunk under the sea. The Rakshasis were laughing, making great noise and drinking oil. Everything of Lanka was reduced to ashes and Kumbhakarna and other heroes being dressed in red were entering into pools of cow-dung. Hear me Rakshasis, fly from this place. The heroic Rama will surely get back his Janaki. If you oppress Sita, Rama will never forgive that. He will surely destroy you all. Janaki is dear to him as his life, and she has

1 South is the region of death.

2 Premonitions of death.—Translator.

followed him in exile, and Rama will never excuse your threats to her. So give up your rude expressions, rather console her with sweet words. Let us pray to her for our good. This is what seems to be right to me. Janaki is over-whelmed with grief; I dreamt of what portends good unto her. Let her be happy at the union with her lover being free from all afflictions. Great danger awaits the Rakshasas from Rama due to their ill-luck, and though you have behaved rudely with her, let us pray for her forgiveness. She will be pleased with our homage and bows, and will deliver us from great fear. You see I do not find any inauspicious sign on her person being devoid of all ornaments she only looks sad. To tell the truth, her desire will be soon fulfilled. Ravana will meet with his death, and Rama will achieve the glory of victory. We shall soon hear of good news about Janaki; these dreams are there. Look how her lotus-eyes grow suddenly expanded, how her left hand is throbbing all on a sudden with all its hair standing on their ends. The sudden throbbing of her left thigh roundish like the trunk of an elephant forebodes the advent of Rama. These birds on the boughs of the trees with their notes are repeatedly announcing the advent of Rama so to speak."

Then the bashful Janaki being delighted hearing of Trijata's dreams, delightfully said, "Trijata! If what you say turns out to be true, surely I will save you all."

CHAPTER XXI

SITA'S SORROWS

Then Sita hearing of the evil news about Ravana was greatly frightened just like a doe in fear of a lion and she began to cry like a girl left in the wilderness. She lamented thus : "What the sages say is true ; surely death never happens to one before the appointed time ; otherwise this sinful soul could not have survived these sorrows. Alas, my heart now rends with grief as a rock is riven by the thunder. The unwelcome Ravana will kill me a month after ; then why shall I be guilty of sin if I give up my life ? I can't give myself up to him, as a Brahmin cannot initiate a non-Brahmin. Now if Rama does not come up here, this villain will cut me into pieces with sharp arrows, as a physician cuts with his instrument the foetus in the mother's womb.¹ I am miserable and without my husband and I shall have to bear the torments of death. Only two months remain. As a thief condemned to death by royal command, bound in fetters, awaits his death and as his agonies grow intense at the end of night before the morning of execution, so I do suffer. After the expiration of the appointed time, my fate will be similar. Alas, Rama ! Alack, Lakshmana ! Alas, Kausalya !

1 Surgical operation on the foetus in the mother's womb in order to save the life of the mother is an advanced branch of modern surgery. Its reference in such an old book as the Ramayana speaks a volume. The Hindus knew the therapeutic use of metals long, long before the modern medical science was born and made a considerable progress in surgery.—Translator.

Alas, mother ! I am overwhelmed like a craft in the stormy sea. Alas ! It is for me that Rama and Lakshmana lost their lives at the hands of the magic deer. It was I who was bewitched by the magic spell of the wicked Rakshasa and sent Rama and Lakshmana deep into the woods. O, Rama ! You are benign and truthful, don't you know that I am here condemned to death by the Rakshasa ? Alas ! My chastity, devotion, forgiveness and asceticism in lying on the ground have come to naught. Like good services to an ungrateful wretch, here virtues are of no avail. I have become emaciated, weak and dark in grief, so there is not the least hope of re-union with my husband. Oh, Rama ! Perhaps after carrying out the behest of your father duly, you have, by this time, returned home, and there being happy and safe, you are now passing your time in the company of good many large-eyed damsels. But I am extremely devoted to you and I am ready to give up my life. In vain I have performed all religious rites, now I shall give up my life. Woe unto me, I am most unfortunate. I shall commit suicide either by poison or by the sword but there is none in this city of the Rakshasas to help me in that."

Janaki thus lamented thinking of Rama. Her face was dry, and she was trembling in all her limbs. She drew near the Sinsapa tree. Intense fire of grief was smouldering in her breast. She was long buried in thoughts and then taking the braid of hair that hung on her back she said, "I shall soon give up my life by twisting the hair round my neck." Then holding a

branch of the Sinsapa tree, she began to cry thinking of Rama, Lakshmana and other members of her family.

CHAPTER XXII

HANUMAN THINKS

Janaki was extremely sad and wretched and she stood holding a branch of the Sinsapa tree. In the meantime various auspicious signs appeared on her person. The large left eye of the dame, having graceful lashes, having dark pupil, white ends, red margin, began to quiver like a lotus shaken by a fish. Her lovely, plump and round left arm, scented with Sandal and Aguru, and which so long served Rama as a pillow began to throb quite all on a sudden, and her fleshy left thigh, roundish like an elephant's trunk, by repeated throbbings indicated as if Rama had appeared before her, and her amber-coloured cloth stained with dust also slipped a little.

Then the damsel having beautiful teeth like pomegranate seeds, became enlivened with joy at these omens, as a seed withered by the sun and the wind is revived by the rain. Her face became bright like the moon released from the eclipse. She was free from grief and her exhaustion was gone. Then her beauteous countenance was augmented in brightness, as the beauty of the night is enhanced by the moon.

Hanuman being concealed in the Sinsapa tree, heard everything, —Janaki's lamentations, Trijata's dream, and the threats of the Rakshasis.

Then that great hero, beholding Janaki like a heavenly damsel in the garden of Nandana, thus began to think, "For whom thousands of Vanaras are searching in different regions, I see her before me. For whom as a spy of Sugriva I was estimating the strength of the enemy in secret, I behold her today before me. I have witnessed the pomp and power of Ravana after crossing the ocean. I shall now, console that devoted wife of Rama. This moon-like beauty did never suffer any sorrow in life, but she is now groaning under it. I shall soothe her now. If I go away without consoling her, I shall be guilty of a grave dereliction of duty and this princess too will renounce her life without finding any means of her release. As it is necessary to console Rama who is anxious for her sight, so it is expedient to encourage her with hopes. But I see the Rakshasis all round her. It is not judicious to talk to her in their presence. Now, what shall I do? I am in a fix. If I go away without consoling her at the end of the night, surely she will die. If I go away without talking to her, how shall I stand before him when he will ask, 'What did Sita say about me?' Surely, for this fault he will reduce me to ashes with angry eyes. If I ask Sugriva to make preparations for war without telling him everything, then his arrival here with his troops will be vain. However, I shall be careful and when the Rakshasis will be unmindful, I shall console her with gentle words. I am a petty Vanara, still I speak Sanskrit like a common man. But if I speak in Sanskrit like a Brahmin, then Sita may be greatly

frightened thinking me to be Ravana. It is, therefore proper to speak in the ordinary dialect of a common man¹, otherwise it won't be possible to console her in any way. Janaki is already overwhelmed with fear of the Rakshasas, so she will be surely alarmed at my sight and speech. Then she will burst into cries considering me to be Ravana who can assume any form at his will. At her cries the grim Rakshasis will gather and search the place, and they will try to bind me and put me to death. Then I shall jump from tree to tree assuming my own form. At that sight the Rakshasis will be greatly frightened and will call the warders. Then the sentries will speedily arrive with their arrows and lances. I shall then be at once secured, and the Rakshasas will easily take me away, so Janaki won't know anything about it. The Rakshasas are cruel and they will not even shrink to put her to death in the meantime. Janaki lives in secrecy in this place girt by the sea, and guarded by the Rakshasas on all sides, and I see there is no entry to Lanka, and if I yield to my capture, Rama will lose one who can help him in his enterprise, and I see none who will be able to cross hundred *Yojanas* of the sea in my absence. Further, it is not known what party will win in the

1 This passage shows that Sanskrit was not the ordinary dialect even of the people of the upper class, but, of course, it could be understood by them. Sanskrit was spoken only by learned men among whom Ravana was surely one and by those who belonged to the priestly class.

(Vide also Muir's Sanskrit Texts).—Translator.

war. So I do not like to meddle in an uncertain matter. If I talk to her just now, all these troubles are likely to follow, whereas if I do not, Sita will die. Works almost completed is often foiled by the foolishness of an incompetent emissary. Sometimes, a policy is frustrated by the indiscretion of an envoy. It is now my duty to be careful so that all the labours of crossing the sea be not in vain. I should devise some means so that Janaki may listen to my words without any fear."

After debating thus in his mind Hanuman decided, "She is now thinking of Rama, if I now utter the name of that hero, she won't be frightened. I shall now communicate to her in a sweet and subdued voice what I have to say, after recounting the pious deeds of Rama, the foremost of the Ikshwaku line. I shall employ only those words so that she can believe me."

CHAPTER XXIII

HANUMAN'S SPEECH

After deciding thus, Hanuman came near Janaki and in gentle words began, "There was a noble king by the name of Dasaratha. He was well accomplished, beautiful and gifted with royal marks. He was born of the Ikshwaku line and had his sway all over the world. Rama is the eldest son of that Dasaratha. He is the foremost of those who are skilled in bows and arrows. He is gentle and the protector of his own people. He is wise and virtuous. That noble hero, at the command of his father, came into forest with his wife and brother

and while he roamed in the forest for hunting he killed many Rakshasa warriors and Khara and Dushana with the troops of Janasthana. The Rakshasa king, Ravana, was greatly enraged at this news and deluded him by the magic of Maricha who tempted Rama by transforming himself into a deer and then Ravana abducted Sita. Rama then made friends with Sugriva in the course of his search for Sita, slew Vali and conferred the rule of Vanara kingdom on Sugriva. Then Vanaras at the command of Sugriva went out in all directions in search of Janaki, and I have crossed hundred *Yojanas* of the sea at the words of Sampati. From what I have heard from Rama, and Lakshmana about the beauty, colour and signs you seem to be Sita."

Thus saying, the heroic Hanuman became silent. Janaki was extremely delighted and raising her face screened by locks of her hair, cast her glance towards the Sinsapa tree. She was extremely delighted at the news of Rama. Then she looked upwards and downwards and cast stealthy glances around her; in the meantime, Hanuman fell upon her eyes like the rising sun.

Hanuman was clad in white, and lay concealed within the branches of the Sinsapa tree. Janaki was startled at his sight. Hanuman was modest, and sweet-speached; his appearance was red like the Asoka flowers and his eyes were of tawny brown colour. Janaki was deeply amazed and took the Vanara to be a formidable being. She was overwhelmed with fear finding him incapable of being stared upon. Her mind was filled with various misgivings and she uttered in an inaudible voice the

names of Rama and Lakshmana in grief and began to weep. She again looked at the Vanara, and thought that perhaps she was dreaming. She was more dead than alive at the sight of the Vanara and was about to faint. After a long time she recovered her senses and thought, "A Vanara of forbidding sight fell on my eyes. However, let prosperity attend on Rama, Lakshmana and king Janaka. It is not a dream, for sleep has left me for my sorrows; there is no happiness in my mind since the absence of Rama. I think of Rama always and utter his name and whatever I see or hear is after my thoughts about him. Now what I have seen just now is not my fancy, for understanding has nothing to do with imagination, nor an imaginary object can be perceived. I am seeing the Vanara clearly before my eyes and I am hearing his voice distinctly. Now, I bow down to Vrihaspati, Indra, Brahma and Agni. Let what the Vanara has just now said prove to be true."

CHAPTER XXIV

HANUMAN'S MESSAGE

Thereupon, Hanuman, the effulgent son of the Wind-god humbly approached Janaki and greeted her. Then joining his two palms over his head respectfully began, "Who art thou, O lotus-eyed beauty, that wearing a soiled silken cloth art standing, holding a branch of the tree? Why do tears of sorrow fall from your eyes like drops of water from the petals of a lotus? To which class amongst the gods, Asuras, Nagas,

Yakshas, Rakshasas and the Kinnaras do you belong ? Art thou in any way related to Rudra, Marut or the Vasus ? Perhaps, thou art Rohini, the best of the stars that has fallen from the heavenly region being deprived of the affection of the Moon ! Art thou the worshipful Arundhati, Oh, auspicious beauty ? Have you offended sage Vasishtha either through ignorance or anger ? Who is your son, who is your brother, who is your father and who is your husband ? From your tears, from your sighs, from your touching the ground, you seem to be a worshipful lady and not a celestial.¹ From the auspicious marks on your person, it appears that thou art either the consort or the daughter of a king. Art thou Sita whom Ravana has stolen away from Janasthana ? May good happen to thee. From thy miserable plight, ascetic dress and unearthly beauty, it seems to me that thou art the queen of Rama."

Thereupon, Janaki on hearing Rama's name cheerfully said, "I am the daughter-in-law of the mighty Dasaratha, the foremost of the kings, daughter of the saintly Janaka and am the wife of the virtuous Rama, my name is Sita. I passed twelve happy years in my father-in-law's house after marriage. Then on the thirteenth year, king Dasaratha desired to invest the crown on Rama. On seeing the preparation for the coronation ceremony queen Kaikeyi told Dasaratha that she would abstain from food and drink and that she would put an

1 It is believed that the celestials do not touch the ground.

end to her life if he would confer the crown on Rama. So she asked him to send Rama to the forest and fulfil his pledge to her. The king Dasaratha was stupefied by these cruel words, thinking of his pledge of granting boons to her. But he was firmly devoted to truth and with tearful eyes he asked Rama to retire to the forest after conferring the kingdom on Bharata. At that time his sire's command pleased Rama more than his prospect of installation, and he cheerfully agreed to it. Rama never takes back what he gives ; he is devoted to truth and never utters any lie. Glorious Rama putting aside his rich apparel, renounced his desire for the kingdom and made me over to his mother. But I did not agree to that arrangement and soon followed him in his exile to the forest. To speak the truth, I do not even covet heaven without Rama. The friendly Lakshmana, in order to accompany Rama, first of all dressed himself in Kusa grass and bark. Thus abiding by the behest of the king we entered the deep forest, never seen before. For some time, we lived in the Dandaka forest. In the meantime the wicked Ravana stole me away from there. He has allowed me two months' time. After which I shall surely give up my life."

Then Hanuman consoling Sita, overwhelmed with sorrow, said, "O worshipful lady, by Rama's command I have come as a messenger to you. He is quite well and has enquired of your welfare. He who is the master of heavenly arms and of the Vedas hath enquired after your well-being. And he who is the constant

attendant of Rama, that heroic Lakshmana too has conveyed his salutations and greetings to your feet."

Thereupon, Janaki became extremely glad at the good news of Rama and Lakshmana. She said, "The saying that a man can enjoy happiness even once in a hundred years in this world seems to be true." In fact Sita was delighted at Hanuman's words, as she would have been at the actual sight of Rama and Lakshmana. In the meantime, Hanuman gradually drew near. As he advanced one or two steps, Sita was filled with apprehensions; and her suspicion that Ravana had come to deceive with a ruse became more and more confirmed in her mind. With a distressed heart she mused, "Woe unto me! Alas, why did I talk to him? It is Ravana I find, who has come in a different guise by virtue of magic."

Then Janaki leaving the branch of the Sinsapa tree sat upon the ground. Hanuman, after advancing a little, greeted her. But she was greatly frightened at that time and could not cast her eyes on him, and heaving a deep sigh, said in a sweet voice, "Perhaps thou art Ravana and hast come to distress me again changing your form by virtue of magic, but this is not worthy of you. Thou art surely Ravana whom I saw in the mendicant's garb at Janasthana. You are, no doubt, Ravana. But it does not behove you to distress me thus who is poorly and famished with fasts. Or perhaps my apprehensions are unfounded, for there is a feeling of joy ever since I have seen you for the first time. Now, if you be a messenger of Rama, please tell me what I ask;

everything connected with Rama is dear to me. May good happen to thee ! Do thou relate the glories of Rama. You are shaking off my firmness, as a mighty current of water sweeps away the bank and renders it un-firm. Ah, what a pleasant dream ! I have been long carried off in dream, but now I see Rama's messenger. If I could once see dear Rama and Lakshmana, then I would not have sunk like this. But due to my ill-luck even dreams are inimical to me. Perhaps it is not a dream, for such joy is not possible after seeing a Vanara in a dream. Perhaps it is an illusion. Or is it insanity ? Perhaps it is a mirage ! I can not fully understand myself nor the Vanara."

After thus debating in her mind, Janaki took the Vanara for the wily Ravana, and then ceased to talk to him. Hanuman then fully realising her thoughts, began to speak in words pleasant to the ear, causing immense delight to Janaki, "Great Rama is spirited like the sun and beautiful like the moon. Every one is warmly devoted to him. He is prosperous like Kuvera and heroic like famous Vishnu. He is sweet-tongued and devoted to truth like Vrihaspati. He is exceedingly beautiful, he is Cupid incarnate. His royal sceptre is raised in proper places.¹ He is the best of men and the world enjoys happiness under the shadow of his arms.² And you will witness that the wicked Villain that lured away that great hero by the guise of a deer and carried

1 That is, he punishes justly.

2 Under his protection.—Translator.

you away from the empty hermitage, will soon reap the consequences of his act. He will soon destroy Ravana with fiery arrows discharged in wrath. I have come to you at his command. Being greatly afflicted by your separation he enquires about your welfare. Rama's friend Sugriva has enquired about your well-being. They always think of you. It is by chance that you are always surrounded by the Rakshasis. You will soon meet Rama and Lakshmana and the Kapi-chief, Sugriva, amongst the Vanaras. At his command, I have crossed the ocean and entered into Lanka, defying the prowess of Ravana. I am not the wily Ravana, banish your apprehension and fear and depend upon my words."

CHAPTER XXV

HANUMAN'S SPEECH

Then Janaki hearing about Rama from Hanuman sweetly replied, "O Vanara ! How are you connected with Rama ? How has there been a friendship between men and the monkeys ? Do thou relate the regal signs that adorn Rama. Then I shall be free from sorrow."

Thereupon, Hanuman replied, "It is my good luck that you have put such questions to me. I shall presently relate unto you all the auspicious marks that I have observed upon the persons of Rama and Lakshmana, O daughter of Janaka ! Rama has eyes like lotus petals and a countenance like the full-moon. He is beautiful from his very birth, and is sincere. He is effulgent like the sun, in forgiveness like the earth, in intelligence

like Vrihaspati and in fame like Vasava. He always follows the right path in every walk of his life, and never swerves from his royal duties. He is the upholder of the four castes, he confers honour upon people and preserves them. Like the sun he is worshipped by all. He observes ascetic vows, he honours saints and proclaims their good services. He is well versed in polity and is greatly devoted to the Brahmanas. He has mastery over Yajurveda, Dhanurveda¹ and the Vedangas.² He is honoured by the scholars of the Vedas. He is broad-shouldered, his arms are long and beautiful, he has a conch-like neck and beautiful countenance. His throat is plump and his eyes are red. And he is known all over the world by the name of Rama. He has a deep voice like that of a trumpet. His colour is of glossy green. He has equally proportioned limbs. His thighs, and wrists are hard; and brows, arms and scrotum are long and he has even knees. His navel is deep and his abdomen and breast are covered with downy streaks of hair. Angles of the eyes, nails and palms are copper-coloured. His gait is slow and majestic. His belly and throat have three folds of skin. There are lines in the soles of his feet. His back is short. He has three locks of hair on his head. He has four lines on his thumb indicating his proficiency in the four Vedas. His

1 The Veda which deals with the art of warfare and use of arms, e. g., arrows.

2 The branches and episodes of the Vedas, generally the Upanishads.

body is four cubits tall ; his arms, thighs and cheeks are even and plump ; eyebrows, the hollows of the nose, lips, nipples, wrists, knee-joints, hips, arms, and feet are evenly proportionate. He is gifted with auspicious marks of the Shastras. His gait is like that of a lion, tiger, elephant, and of a bull. His lips and jaws are fleshy. His nose is pointed. His words are sweet and his skin is smooth. His two arms, two little fingers, two thighs and two legs are long. His breast, forehead, neck, arms, navel, feet and back are spacious. He is gifted with grace, fame and effulgence. Both his paternal and maternal lines are pure. His breasts, nose, shoulders and forehead are high. His fingers, hairs, down, nails, skin, beard, eye-sight and intellect are sharp. Raghava with a due division of his time is engaged in acquiring virtue, wealth, emancipation and desire. He is truthful and graceful. He amasses wealth and thereby protects all. He has proper knowledge of time and place for everything and he is dear unto all. His step-brother Saumitri is gifted with incomparable prowess and is equal in attachment, beauty and accomplishment. The body of that beautiful one is of gold hue, whereas that of the glorious Rama is green. And these two lions of men have no other delight but seeking thee and while they ransacked the world in search of you they met us in the forest and ranging the earth for you they found Sugriva, the lord of the Vanaras, at the foot of the Rishyamuka mountain covered with trees, banished by his elder brother, Vali, and resorting there in his fear, and we were serving that truthful Sugriva, the lord of the

Vanaras, driven from the kingdom by his elder brother. And beholding those two best of men clad in bark and with bows in their hands, that foremost of the Vanaras stricken with fear, leaped up and stationed himself on the summit of the hill. He then sent me to them, and thereupon by Sugriva's decree I approached with joined palms those two foremost of men, endowed with beauty and royal signs. They were pleased with me. Being informed of the real facts and placing those two princes on my back, I arrived at the top of the hill and communicated the truth unto the high-souled Sugriva. Then conversing with each other, those two lords of men and Vanaras attained great delight, and they consoled each other narrating their respective tales of misfortune. Rama then consoled Sugriva turned out by his formidable brother Vali on account of his wife. Thereupon, Lakshmana related to Sugriva, the Lord of the Kapis, the sorrow of Rama in consequence of your being carried off by Ravana, and hearing Lakshmana's words, the Lord of the Vanaras grew pale, like the bright sun under the jaws of Rahu. And collecting all those ornaments which were thrown off by thee on the ground when thou wert borne off, the leader of the Vanara hosts brought them before Rama, but they could not make out your whereabouts, and all those ornaments which were handed over to Rama, were collected by me when they fell jingling on the ground. Rama was beside himself with grief and placed them on his lap. The God-like Rama bewailed in various accents. Those accentuated his grief more. And being overwhelmed with it, that high-souled one laid

himself low on the ground. And I raised him up with various words. And looking again and again with Saumitri at those precious ornaments, Raghava handed them over to Sugriva. O worshipful lady ! Raghava is being consumed with grief in thy absence, like unto a volcano smouldering with a perpetual fire. Grief, anxiety and sleeplessness are distressing Rama for thee like unto three fires¹ burning down the fire-temple. Raghava has been moved by the separation like a huge mountain shaken by a terrible earthquake. O daughter of a king ! He is roaming through forests, rivers and fountains but he finds delight nowhere, O Janaki ! Raghava will soon regain thee bringing about the destruction of Ravana with all his kith and kin. Rama, the foremost of men, and Sugriva entered into a friendly alliance to compass Vali's destruction and to search for thee. Thereupon, those two princes came to Kishkindhya and killed Vali, the lord of the Vanaras, in battle. And destroying Vali by his prowess, Rama made Sugriva king over all the Vanaras and the Bhallukas. And in this way, O dame, the alliance between Rama and Sugriva was made. I am their emissary and my name is Hanuman. The Kapi chief, Sugriva, after obtaining the kingdom has sent the Vanaras in different directions in search of you. They are now ranging over the whole world. Prince Angada has set out with one third of the whole army. I have come with that Angada. In our journey we met with many difficulties in the Vindhya hill and

¹ Three fires maintained by the Brahmana householder taken together.—Translator.

many days were unfortunately spent in that region. We then passed our days in despair of accomplishing our task and we were getting ourselves ready for death in fear of Sugriva. I searched mountains, hills, fountains, rills and forests and getting no clue about you, we began to observe fast in order to give up our life by starvation. At this, Angada began to lament, talked again and again about your absence, destruction of Vali and about our fast unto death. At that very time, a huge formidable bird arrived there ; his name was Sampati. He was the brother of Jatayu. Having heard from Angada about his brother's death, he angrily enquired about the slayer of Jatayu. In reply to his query Angada said that the wicked Ravana had carried you away from Janasthana and that he had killed Jatayu. At this Sampati was greatly overwhelmed with sorrow, and we had the information from him that you were in Lanka.

"Being encouraged by these words of the Vihanga chief we emerged from the Vindhya hill and arrived at the sea-shore. Then we became highly anxious. The Vanara hosts grew sad finding no means of getting at Lanka. Then I crossed hundred *Yojanas* of the sea and entered the city of the Rakshasas by night and saw you and Ravana.

"O worshipful lady ! I have narrated everything from the beginning to the end. Now condescend to speak to me. I am Rama's messenger and it is for Rama that I have done this daring act. I have come here for your whereabouts. The Wind-God is my father and I am a minister of Sugriva. Now, Rama is quite well ;

so is the auspicious Lakshmana devoted to the services of his elder brother. I have come here at the command of Sugriva. It is for you that I have come towards the south. The Vanara hosts are greatly anxious for your absence. Now, I shall cheer them up by your news. All the labours of my crossing the sea, to my good luck, have been crowned with success. O worshipful lady ! Now I shall win the glory of finding you out and the heroic Rama will soon recover you by destroying Ravana with his brood. I am Hanuman, son of Keshari, the Kapi chief. This Keshari lived in a beautiful hill called Malyavan ; thence he repaired to the Gokarna hill. There, at the holy watering place, he at the requests of the saints killed an Asura named Sadan. I am that Keshari's son, born of his wife from the seed of the Wind-God, and by my prowess I am known as Hanuman. I cited all these things previously to create confidence of Rama in me. Be now assured, he will soon rescue you from this place."

Then Sita from these unimpeachable proofs believed Hanuman to be an emissary of Rama. Her mind was filled with delight and tears came to her eyes, and her face shone like the moon just released from the shadow of eclipse. He took Hanuman to be a Vanara. And all her doubts and apprehensions were removed. After that Hanuman said to the beautiful damsel, pleasant to the sight, "Be now comforted. I have told you everything. Now, say what I am to do and what is your own desire. Just tell me. I won't stop here long. I am born of the seed of the Wind-God and I am like him. I shall accomplish by my prowess whatever you may ask me to do."¹

¹ These and the following chapters are said to have suggested to Kalidas, so says Mallinatha, his immortal commentator, about the scheme of his immortal poem Meghaduta or the cloud messenger.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE RING

Then Hanuman in order to create confidence in Sita's mind, said, 'O worshipful dame ! I am the messenger of the intelligent Rama and a Vanara by race. Behold this ring with Rama's name engraved on it. Rama has made it over to me and I have brought it for your confidence. Be comforted, your sorrows will soon be over.'

Thereupon Janaki taking the ring that used to adorn her lord's finger, gazed at it with thirsty eyes. And she was delighted with it as she would have been by the actual presence of Rama. Her beautiful face brightened with joy, just like the moon emerged from the eclipse, and she, welcoming Hanuman with affection, cheerfully, said, "O Vanara ! Since you have succeeded in coming alone to this city of the Rakshasas, you are undoubtedly clever, bold and heroic. Great is thy prowess since you have crossed hundred Yojanas of the sea full of crocodiles and sharks, thinking it as a mere pool, and your heroism is indeed praiseworthy. O hero ! I can't take you for an ordinary person ; you are neither afraid at the sight of the ocean, nor of Ravana. If you have come here at the behest of Rama, then talk to me. Rama wouldn't have sent an ordinary unknown man to me. It is to my good luck that I have learnt about the welfare of Rama and Lakshmana. Tell me, thou messenger, nothing untoward has happened to Rama. Why does he not reduce the earth, encircled by the

oceans, into ashes by the fire of his wrath, like the doomsday fire? Neither is it difficult for him to vanquish the Gods, but it seems to me that due to my ill luck the period of sorrow is not over. O hero! Is Rama now overwhelmed with grief? Is he not trying to rescue me? Has he been overwhelmed with miseries and fear? Does he lose his intelligence at the time of work? Has he the desire of displaying his manliness? Does he not wish to acquire victory by winning friends by equality and fraternity, and by punishing his enemies, or sowing dissensions amongst them? Has he got true friends? Does he show them respect and love? Is he idle to invoke the blessings of the Gods? Has he grown indifferent to me on account of being at a distance from me? That prince never suffered before, but always lived in happiness. Has he been overwhelmed by a succession of misfortunes? Is he always informed about the welfare of the worshipful Kausalya, Sumitra and Bharata? Has Rama been quite overwhelmed with grief in absence of me? Is he always unmindful? Will not Bharata, devoted to his brother, spare his army, under the command of his ministers, for my rescue? Will not Sugriva, the Kapi king, come here surrounded by his sharp Vanara army? Will not heroic Lakshmana destroy the Rakshasas with his sharp arrows? Shall I not see Ravana soon destroyed with his family by Rama's shafts? Has the lotus-scented countenance of Rama been withered, as a lotus is dried up by the intense heat of the sun? Is he now free from all fears and sorrows, as he was when he renounced the kingdom for piety and

entered the forest with me on foot? O messenger! There is no dearer person, father or mother, to Rama than myself. So long as I do not receive any information of Rama I shall manage to live." Saying this Janaki lapsed into silence to listen to the sweet words concerning Rama.

Then Hanuman raising his hands over his head and with joined palms began, "O worshipful lady! The lotus-eyed Rama does not know that you are now living in Lanka, or he would have surely rescued you by this time. Now, after receiving your information from me he will soon arrive here with the Vanara hosts, and will agitate the undisturbable deep by his arrows, and denude the city of Lanka of all the Rakshasas. Even if Death himself interferes, or the Gods stand against him, he will surely destroy them all. O lady! Rama being stricken with grief for your absence has become restless like an elephant harassed by a lion. I swear by the names of the Malaya, the Mandara, the Vindhya, the Sumeru and the Dardura mountains¹ and by touching these fruits and roots, that you will soon behold the face of Rama, beautiful as the rising full-moon, and adorned with ear-rings, O worshipful dame, you will soon witness Rama seated on the Prasravana hill like Indra seated on Airavata. In your absence he does not touch meat and wine, but subsists on fruits and

1 Swearing is a primitive habit of man. Here, Hanuman swears not by name of any deity but by hills and mountains, by fruits and roots.—Translator.

roots, and that prince passes the whole night in your thought and is never conscious of mosquitoes, insects or reptiles. He is always morose and pensive, and in your absence no other thoughts but yours ever arise in his mind. He ever suffers from sleeplessness, and if he at all falls asleep, he suddenly wakes up with the gentle cry of "Sita" on his lips. He heaves deep sighs whenever he sees any fruit, flower or anything dear to a woman, and sheds tears uttering, 'Alack, my love !' O lady, that hero is thus being tormented now, and he is ever trying to get you back."

Thereupon, Janaki of a moon-like face replied, "O Vanara ! Your words are like honey mixed with gall ! That Rama is always thinking of me is sweet as nectar, but that he is overwhelmed with grief is bitter as poison. Whether a man be in great prosperity, or extreme difficulty,—Fate, as if by a rope, draws every one to his destiny. In fact, none can over-ride Fate, and it is due to this Fate that we have fallen into such distress. Now with great efforts and care will we see the end of these sorrows, as one with great difficulty swims to the shore, when the boat gets foundered on the sea. I know not when that great hero will come to me destroying Ravana with his broad-sword and levelling Lanka to the ground ? Request him to accomplish the task quickly ; I shall keep my life till this year does not expire. According to the period of time appointed by the cruel Ravana, this is the tenth month, and two months remain. Vibhishana entreated Ravana much to

restore me to Rama, but that villain paid no heed. He is in the grip of Death and Death himself is goading him to battle. Vibhishana's eldest daughter, named Kala, once came to me at the behest of her mother and she has related all this to me. There is an old, wise and educated Rakshasa named Avindhya, and Ravana holds him in great esteem ; he once told Ravana that if he did not return me to Rama, then the Rakshasa race would be extinct, but this villain did not pay any heed to his words.

"O Vanara ! Now, it seems to me that Rama will soon recover me. There is no doubt about it. Whenever I think of his prowess, my rescue does not seem to be at all difficult. Energy, manliness and prowess are present in him. Which enemy of Rama would not shrink from him who has slain fourteen thousand Rakshasas alone in Janasthana without the help of Lakshmana ? Though the Rakshasas have put him into trouble, they can never be compared with him. I am aware of his prowess, as Sachi of Indra's. He is like the glowing sun, his arrows are his rays, now he will surely dry up the Rakshasas like water."

Then Hanuman said, "O worshipful lady ! After hearing thy news from me, Rama will soon arrive here with the Vanaras and the Bhallukas. Or you get upon my back ; I shall to-day rescue you from the sufferings at the hands of the Rakshasas, as I shall be able to cross the ocean easily taking you on my back. I shall even carry Lanka' with Ravana. I shall present you to

1 A physical impossibility but this spirit of bragging is due to poetical Hyperboles. Perhaps the under-

Rama as fire conveys sacrificial offerings to Indra. To-day, you will surely see Rama and Lakshmana, mighty as Vishnu. O lady ! Rama is greatly anxious for a sight of you and he is waiting on the hill, so get upon my back. Don't neglect, or be indifferent to this proposal. You will be united with Rama like the star Rohini with the moon. Seeing all auspicious marks on you, it appears to me that you will be soon united with Rama. Now get upon my back. I shall cross the sea through the air. None of the Rakshasas will be able to follow me. O worshipful lady ! In the manner I have come here, I shall return by the same way taking you on my back."

Janaki was both delighted and astonished at these words. She said, "O hero ! How will you carry me through such a long distance ? To tell you the truth, these words prove your apish nature.¹ You are quite puny in size, how will you take me to Rama ?"

"This", Hanuman thought, "is my first and new defeat from Janaki's words. She is quite ignorant of

lying meaning is that Hanuman could carry off Sita without any risk whatsoever.

1 From these words it is clear that in yore the people of the Deccan (Southern India) were at first derisively called monkeys, perhaps in distinction from the civilised Aryans, but when the Ramayana was composed, they were fairly an advanced people, but the former stigma to their names still remained, and the poet's imagination and popular fancy, still played with their names and loved to depict them with all the tricks and absurdities of apish nature. These words verily testify to this fact.

my strength and prowess. Let her now witness what shape and size I may assume at my will." Thus thinking Hanuman resolved to reveal his own form to Janaki, and coming down from the Sinsapa tree he began to expand in bulk to inspire confidence in Sita. He was flaming in effulgence like the Mandara hill. His body was formidable, face red and his teeth and nails hard as the thunderbolt. Then assuming his original form and standing before Janaki he said, "O worshipful lady ! I shall easily carry away this city of Lanka with its forests, hills, palaces, gates and even with Ravana. Believe me, and entertain no doubts about it. Remove Rama's and Lakshmana's grief by going along with me."

Then the lotus-eyed Janaki seeing the formidable form of Hanuman said, "O hero ! I now realise your prowess and strength. Your speed is like the wind, energy like Fire. In truth, how could an ordinary man ever come here ? However, I have not the slightest doubt that you will be able to cross the ocean taking me with you. But you are to act after careful consideration. You see, when you will carry me on your back, I may be paralysed with fear at thy great speed. I shall remain on the air over the ocean ; at that time I may even slip down from your back. The sea is full of aquatic animals, and if I fall into it I shall surely be devoured by sharks and crocodiles. O hero ! I am a woman : if you take me with you, the Rakshasas seeing me thus abducted, will inform Ravana and will chase you at his command. Then those Rakshasa warriors will surround thee, and your life will be in danger.

They are armed, whereas, you are single. In these circumstances how will you avoid them? Perhaps there will come a fight between you and them. Then I may fall from your back quite trembling with fear. The Rakshasas are most formidable; they may even partly win victory over you, or if you be victorious at all, then at the time of the fight you may be unmindful about my protection. I shall then fall down from your back, and the Rakshasas will carry me away. At that time they may even kill me from thy hands. Again victory and defeat are uncertain in battle. At the field of battle the Rakshasas will set up terrible yells, and I shall surely be stricken with fear; then all your efforts will be fruitless. O hero! Though you can easily destroy the Rakshasas, yet by your act you will rob Rama of his glory, or the Rakshasas, wresting me from your hands may keep me concealed in such a secret place that neither Rama, nor the Vanaras will know anything about it. So all your labours for me, as crossing the ocean and other efforts, will be in vain.

"But, if on the other hand, you come here with Rama, it will bear great fruit. The lives of the heroic Rama, Lakshmana, of yourself, of Sugriva and of other Vanaras are at my disposal, but if you despair about my rescue I shall surely give up my life. O hero, on account of my devotion towards my husband, I do not wish to touch the body of a third person. The wicked Ravana forcibly touched my person, but what could I do? Then I was quite helpless and overwhelmed with grief and

fear. It is now Rama's duty to come personally and rescue me from this place. I have myself witnessed the prowess of that great hero. There is no match for him amongst the Gods, the Gandharvas, the Uragas. Who can face him when he is seen burning like a flame taking up arrows in his hand in the field of battle? When in the field of battle he, along with Lakshmana, roams like an infuriated elephant; bright effulgence comes from him like the rays from the doomsday sun. O messenger! Bring him soon here with Sugriva. I have been greatly afflicted with sorrow in absence of Rama. Make me happy by bringing him here."

CHAPTER XXVII

SITA'S MESSAGE

Then, Hanuman, being mightily pleased with Janaki's words, began to speak, "You have said what is just and consistent with feminine nature, modesty and devotion to the husband. You are a woman, so it is impossible for you to cross hundred *Yojanas* of the sea sitting on my back. O Janaki, you have just now mentioned, that it is not proper for you to touch anybody besides Rama; these words are worthy of Rama's consort. Who else could have spoken like that? Now, Rama will hear from me all that you have just now stated to me. I have told you all these for my affectionate solicitations for Rama's welfare. This city of Lanka is highly impregnable, and the sea too is very difficult to cross, but my strength too is extraordinary. I have therefore told you all these. It is my desire to

get you re-united even this day with Rama. In fact, it is my love for him and my respect for you that have induced me, to propose like this. Don't think I have any other motive behind it. Now, if you are not prepared to go with me, give me some token to create Raghava's confidence."

Thereupon, Janaki, hoarse with tears, said, "O envoy, please mention to Rama about this excellent remembrancer. There is a hill to the north east of the Chitrakuta mountain. It abounds with fruits and flowers and are inhabited by pious saints. The Mandakini flows at a short distance from it. What I am speaking of to you occurred at that place. Go and report my words to Rama. Tell him that after sporting in the water in the fragrant wood-land of the Chitrakuta, once he sat on my lap with clothes wet with water. At that time, a crow being desirous to feed on my flesh tore my breasts with its beak, and I threatened it with a stone, but it continued to tear my breasts and did not fly off. Being annoyed and angry with that bird as I tried to tighten the cloth round my waist, it slipped a little. I drew my zone again and again, and thou looked at me in that situation and laughed over it. And I was greatly enraged and ashamed by your laughter and being wounded by the crow, I drew near you. Thereupon, tired as I was. I was pacified by your caress and laugh. Tears were on my face and I was wiping off my eyes with my cloth. I was greatly angry with the bird. Then I slept for a long time from fatigue on your lap, and you too in turn slept over mine

"After that, I awoke and stood up. The crow too again came near me and tore my breast with his beak. On your rising from sleep, you were greatly enraged seeing me thus bruised and torn, and said, with a thundering voice, 'Tell me who hast torn thy breast; who has wished to play with a penta-hooded angry snake?' Saying this you cast your eyes round and suddenly saw that crow with bloody claws before me. He was the son of Indra; in speed he was like the wind and was living in a sub-terranean cave. On seeing it, your eyes revolved in anger and resolving to kill him at once, you took up a blade of grass from the grassy seat and fixed it to your bow with Brahma *mantra*. Thereupon, the blade of grass aimed at the bird glowed with fire that would destroy the world. You then hurled that flaming blade at the crow and it chased the crow high over the sky. Being thus chased, the crow to save himself traversed various regions and being renounced by his father, Indra, and the great sages, he after ranging the three worlds at last resorted to Rama's shelter. You are protector of those who seek shelter under you. Seeing him lying at your feet, weak and pale you took pity on him and said, 'O crow! It is impossible to render this Brahma weapon futile; therefore, O bird, speak what is to be done.' He then offered his right eye for life, and you destroyed his right eye. Then bowing to you and to king Dasaratha, the crow took his leave.

"O Lord! When you discharged dreadful Brahma weapon against a crow for me, why are you then sparing that villain who has stolen me away from you? Whose

husband thou art that she is now like a husbandless woman ; have pity on her. I have heard from your own lips that kindness is the highest virtue. You are energetic and heroic, and your gravity is like that of the sea. You are foremost of the heroes and mighty Why do you not destroy the Rakshasas ? There is none amongst the Gods and the Gandharvas who can resist Rama in battle. Now, if that hero has the slightest pity for me, why does he not slay the Rakshasas with his sharp arrows ? Why does not Lakshmana rescue me at his command ? The prowess of these two princes are rare even amongst the Gods. Why are they indifferent now ? When they are indifferent towards things that they can accomplish, it seems, I am somehow guilty."

Then Hanuman said to the tearful Janaki, "I tell you the truth, and that Rama has grown indifferent to all things in grief for your absence, and the heroic Lakshmana is extremely sad at this plight of Rama. I have now found you out after great trouble, so don't give way to despair any more. To tell you the truth, your sorrows will soon be over. Rama and Lakshmana will reduce the three worlds into ashes for a sight of you. The heroic Rama will carry you back to Ayodhya after slaying Ravana with his brood. Now tell me if you have anything to communicate to Sugriva and to the other Vanaras."

Thereupon, Janaki replied, "O Messenger ! Do thou on my behalf enquire after the welfare of him who renouncing vast wealth and gems of all kinds, and a beloved wife of transcendent beauty, and bowing down

at the feet of his parents followed his elder brother to the forest; he who looked upon me as his mother and honoured his elder brother as his father, who could not understand anything about my abduction before, and who is dearer to Rama than myself; who is, in all respects, like my worshipful father-in-law, who is not afraid of any arduous feat, who is sweet-speeched and exceedingly beautiful, for whom Rama has forgotten the grief for his father, enquire after his welfare on my behalf. May he remove all my sufferings. O Messenger! Thou art at the root of success, and Rama will look upon you with affection and love for your endeavours. Tell him again and again that I shall live only for two months. I tell you the truth, that after the expiry of two months, I won't keep up my life. The vicious Ravana has imprisoned me with insult, and as Vishnu rescued the earth from the nether region, so let him rescue me from here."

Then Sita taking an excellent jewel from her head and making it over to Hanuman said, "O hero! After your return, hand over this ornament of the head to Rama."

Then Hanuman taking that token in his hand tried to fix it on his finger,¹ but was afraid of discovery on account of the brilliance of the jewel. After that Hanuman bowing unto Janaki and going round her, stood by her side. He was exceedingly delighted at the sight of Sita and ever thought of Rama and Lakshmana in his mind. He was glad as one becomes delighted in breathing bracing air high up on the hill, and he was about to start with the gem.

1 Another reading has, 'But it did not enter into it.'

CHAPTER XXVIII

SITA'S WORDS

Thereupon Janaki said, "O Messenger ! This token is not unknown to Rama. He will at once remember me, my mother and king Dasaratha at the sight of it. O hero ! It seems Rama will engage you in future for my rescue. If you are commissioned for it, listen to me how the task can be accomplished, how the sufferings can be over, how my troubles may be ended. Think of it and decide the course of action."

Agreeing to these words of Janaki, Hanuman was about to start after greeting her duly. At this, Janaki burst forth choked with tears, "O hero, after your return enquire after the welfare of Rama and Lakshmana, and of Sugriva with his counsellors and of other aged Vanaras. Let Rama do that, so that my sufferings may end, and that I may get over this sea of trouble while I am still alive. O hero ! Do thou reap righteousness by helping him with mere words. Rama is highly energetic ; he will surely display his heroism to rescue me if he hears everything." Then Hanuman folding his hands over his head said, "O worshipful lady ! Rama will soon arrive here surrounded by the Vanaras and the Bhallukas and remove all the pangs of grief by destroying the enemies in battle. When he discharges his shafts, none can stand before him. He will challenge Suryya,¹ Indra and Death for you and will conquer the whole of the world surrounded by the

1 Suryya literally means the sun, but here a distinction has been made between what we call the sun and the presiding deity of the sun, which is a flaming mass of matter. The presiding deity is like the soul that inhabits the body.

oceans." Janaki heard with respect all what Hanuman had said, and finding him ready to start, looked at him repeatedly.

Then, out of her love for Rama, she again addressing Hanuman said, "If you wish, you may keep yourself in hiding in some secret place at least for a day and remove the fatigue of your journey and start tomorrow. To tell you the truth, my sorrows are assuaged at your sight. Various kinds of misgivings now disturb my mind. I have grave suspicion about your coming back to this place, the passage to which is so arduous and difficult. But it will be difficult to sustain my life unless you come back. I am suffering untold misery ; now your absence will pain me more. O hero ! I don't know how the two princes, the Vanaras and the Bhallukas will cross this sea so hard to cross. In the three worlds only you and Vinata's son, Garuda, have the power of crossing the sea. You are intelligent and mighty. I admit that you can alone accomplish the deed, and can win arduous fame, but it will be proper for Rama to come with his army and destroy the enemies. If he rescues me by overrunning Lanka with the Vanara host, then it will be worthy of him. O messenger ! Now you should devise means so that the great hero may display his valour."

Hanuman then replied to Janaki's reasonable words, "O worshipful lady ! Sugriva is devoted to truth and he has taken vow of your rescue. The Vanaras are all warlike and obedient to him. They are of quick pace like the flight of thought ! They never lag behind in

daring deeds. They have travelled over the earth various times with wind-like speed. Under the Kapichief there are Vanaras superior to me and other like myself, but there is none inferior to me. Not to speak of those Vanaras, you find only a weak and humble Vanara like myself before you. The best men are not engaged in such works, only persons of inferior merits are despatched on such duties. So give up your sorrows. The best of the Kapis will cross the ocean by leaping and arrive at Lanka. Rama and Lakshmana on my back, like the sun and the moon risen at the same time, will arrive here. They will reduce Lanka to ruins, destroy Ravana with his brood and take you back to Ayodhya. Be comforted and count your days. And I assure you that you will soon behold Rama blazing like fire."

Hanuman then to start again observed, "O worshipful lady ! You will soon witness Rama and Lakshmana at the gate of Lanka, and the Vanaras, whose sharp nails and teeth are like weapons and who can defeat even the tiger and the lion by their strength and valour, will soon be here, and the Vanara army will set up heroic roars in evidence of their eagerness for fight. O lady ! Rama is grief-stricken for your absence and there is no peace in his mind. Don't shed tears, let no fear find any place in thy heart on any occasion. You will be reunited with Rama, like Sachi with Indra. Where is a greater hero than Rama or Lakshmana ? They are like fire in their energy and in agility like the wind. Those two heroes are your protectors, and you won't have to remain long in this dreary region of the Rakshasas.

Rama will soon arrive ; wait so long I do not return to him."

Thereupon, Janaki said for her own good, "O messenger ! You are sweet-speeched and I have been so much delighted by your sight as the thirsty sun-burnt earth at the advent of the rains. Devise some ways and means so that, with this body emaciated in grief, I may get a touch of Rama's person. Show this water-born gem to Rama and mention to him how he destroyed one eye of Indra's son, the crow, by Brahma *Astra* in anger. Besides these two remembrancers, tell him on my behalf and in my words, 'My lord, My Tilaka having been wiped off, you painted another one beside my cheek with red arsenic. Why being mighty as Indra or Varuna, dost thou now disregard the ravished Sita fallen into the midst of the Rakshasas? This jewel of my crown I have preserved with care in my misfortune. I sustain myself by its sight, as I used to cheer up myself in my sorrowful moments by your sight. Now I send it as my token to it, but if you do not come here soon, I will put an end to my life. O lord ! It is for you, that I have been suffering all these sorrows, these harsh words and company of the Rakshasas. I shall preserve my life for two months more, and if you do not come within that time I shall surely renounce my life. The wicked Ravana is cruel, he looks upon me with lustful eyes, and if there be delay on your part I shall then surely put an end to myself."

Then Hanuman, hearing the speech to tearful Janaki, resumed, "O worshipful lady ! I swear that Rama

is indifferent about everything. The heroic Lakshmana too is sorrowfully passing his days seeing this change in Rama. Now with great difficulty I have found thee out. Don't give way to despair. Rama will soon remove your sorrows. Rama and Lakshmana, eager to see you, will reduce the three worlds into ashes. The great hero, Rama, will carry thee to Ayodhya after destroying Ravana with his followers. O worshipful lady ! Give me some other token that Rama may instantly recognise, and that will be greatly delightful to him."

Thereupon Janaki said, "O Messenger, I have given you the best token. Rama will fondly look at it and believe your words." Then Hanuman prepared to start after greeting Janaki. At this Janaki said with tearful eyes, "O messenger, ask on my behalf about the welfare of Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva with his counsellors. Ask Rama kindly to rescue me without delay. Tell him about my sorrows and the harsh reproaches of the Rakshasis. What shall I say more ? May you now safely return."

After taking leave from Janaki, Hanuman thought, "I have found out Janaki, I have hardly any other object for coming here. The only thing that remains, is to ascertain the power of the enemy, but that must not be done by gifts, etc., but by punishment. A treaty with Rakshasas will be of no use ; gifts will not prevail over wealth ; nor is it easy to sow dissensions amongst Rakshasas proud of their prowess, so it is expedient to resort to might. Without this I do not see any other way of ascertaining their strength. Besides, if the

Rakshasas meet with defeat at my hand, Ravana's ardour in the future fight will surely be damped. Though king Sugriva has not given me any direction about it, no guilt attaches to the envoy who after accomplishing his main object does something else. I have found out Janaki now, and if I can gather some thing important concerning our own strength and that of the enemy in battle, then his mission will be complete in every respect. How will my arrival be a precursor of good? How can their real strength be ascertained? This day I shall see Ravana with his ministers and followers, and then shall I be able easily to ascertain his real motive and strength. After this I shall return from this place.

"This Asoka garden is full of trees and creepers and is pleasant to the eyes like the celestial garden of Nandana. I shall destroy this garden as fire reduces dry logs into ashes. Certainly, Ravana will be greatly enraged at this, and will appear on the scene with his army. Then I shall fight against the formidable Rakshasas and after destroying them shall return to Sugriva." After deciding this, Hanuman began to break down the Asoka woods in anger, and felled down trees with great violence, as if uprooted by the force of the wind. Then the birds began to cry in fear, the coppery leaves of the forest became tarnished, summits of the sporting hills were crushed, waters of the tanks and pools were agitated, and the trees were levelled to the ground. The denizens of the garden began to run to and fro in all directions. And the Asoka forest was divested of its

beauty like that of a burnt-down forest, and it then appeared like an intoxicated damsel whose cloth had slipped from her body. In fact, Asoka garden was in a wretched plight at the hand of Hanuman. Hanuman then climbed the gate of the garden to fight single-handed with odds.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FIRST CLASH

The Rakshasis of Lanka got frightened at the sound of the breaking of the trees and the cries of birds. Beasts and birds were running in every direction, and there were evil portents everywhere. Many of the Rakshasis had been asleep. On awaking they found Hanuman seated upon the arch of the garden gate after the destruction of the Asoka forest.

At that time, Hanuman grew quite formidable and fearful at the sight of the Rakshasis. Thereupon the panick-stricken Rakshasis questioned Janaki about it, "O Janaki! Who is this Vanara? Whose spy is he? Whence and why has he come? Why were you talking with him? O large-eyed beauty, do not be afraid, please tell us what the Vanara has told you."

Then Janaki replied, "How is it possible for me to read the motives of the Rakshasas, capable of assuming different forms at will? You know best who is that Vanara and what is his object. Some Rakshasa has come here assuming this guise. This is all that I have understood and I have been greatly frightened by it."

Then the Rakshasis hurriedly ran away from that place. Some of them appeared before Ravana and said, "O Rakshasa king ! A dreadful Vanara is seated upon the gate. We earnestly asked Janaki, but she did not wish to disclose the identity of the Vanara. The Vanara has destroyed your Asoka garden. He is a spy of either Indra or Kuvera, or Rama has sent him to know the whereabouts of Sita. However, that strange Vanara has destroyed your Asoka woods. He has destroyed everything, but has not touched even the shadow of the tree under which Janaki is seated. The object of sparing that tree might be either the safety of Janaki, or the fatigue of the Vanara. But there is no question of his fatigue. He has certainly spared Janaki. The only tree he has spared, is the great leafy Sinsapa tree under which Janaki sits. Just punish him severely. He has destroyed your pleasure-garden. Sita has captivated your heart and who else except him who has no love for his life dares to talk to her ?"

At this news Ravana was inflamed with rage, as a funeral pyre leaps into flame. Tears rolled down his eyes as drops of oil fall from a burning wick. Then he at once sent his warlike servants to secure Hanuman. At his command eighty thousand servants set out equipped with maces and mallets. They eagerly proceeded to capture Hanuman.

At that time Hanuman was waiting at the gate, determined for the fight. The Rakshasas came before him as moths drawn by the glare of a flame. Some of them were armed with clubs, some with lances, some

with Pattishes, some with shafts, some with Argalas, some with Prosas and some with Taunaras. At their sight Hanuman, huge as a mountain, began to lash his tail repeatedly on the ground and roared like a lion. He began to beat his tail on the ground filling the city of Lanka with its noise. The birds fell down from the sky at its clapping sound. Hanuman became quite restive with the ardour for fight. He proclaimed from the top of his voice, "Victory to Rama, to Lakshmana and to Sugriva. I am the son of the Wind god. I am the servant of Rama, king of Ayodhya, and my name is Hanuman. When I shall hurl down stones, thousands of Ravana's will not be my match. All the Rakshasas will witness today that I shall go away after destroying Lanka and greeting Janaki afterwards."

Then the Rakshasas were greatly frightened at the terrible roar of Hanuman. They saw him above, hanging like an evening cloud. He was ever uttering Rama's name, so they became fully convinced that he was an emissary of Rama. Then they surrounded him with dreadful weapons. Being thus besieged by the enemies on all sides Hanuman took off a huge bolt from the gate and attacked them with that, and like Indra engaged in the destruction of the Asuras he began to slay them by that bolt. Sometimes with the bolt in his hand, he appeared like Garuda ranging in the sky. After the death of those servants Hanuman again sat upon the gate for further fight.

Then the survivors beat a hasty retreat and informed Ravana about the destruction of his servants at the

hand of the Vanara. At this Ravana burned with rage and addressing Jamvumali, son of Prahasta, said, "O hero! Get yourself ready to set out for battle without further delay."

CHAPTER XXX JAMVUMALI'S FLIGHT

After the destruction of the servants', Hanuman thought within himself, "I have destroyed the pleasure-garden, now I shall demolish that high temple² like the cliff of the Sumeru mountain." Thus resolving in his mind he stood up with a bound. At that time he shone like the Sun in effulgence. He broke down the temple by his strength and after expanding his body he began to strike his arms.³ Its sounds filled Lanka with thundering echoes and the sentries of the temple fainted in fear. In the meantime Hanuman declared at the top of his voice, "Victory to Rama, Lakshmana and to Sugriva, protected by Rama. I am a servant of Rama and my name is Hanuman. The Rakshasas will witness me this day to return after the destruction of Lanka."

Hanuman thus set up terrible roars and the keepers of the temple rushed towards him with various weapons

¹ Retinue of Ravana.—T.

² *Chaityaprasad* means a building designed for deities.—T.

³ By way of challenge as wrestlers do when they challenge their rivals in the wrestling ground.—T.

from all sides. And as they began to strike from all sides, they resembled a whirlpool of the Ganges. Thereupon Hanuman broke down a huge pillar, ornamented with gold and a hundred borders, and began to whirl it in great speed. Fire was produced by the friction of the pillar and the whole place was set ablaze by that fire. In the meantime Hanuman slew a number of Rakshasas by hurling down stones and trees. Seeing the palace burning, Hanuman addressing them from above said, "You see, there are many like me in the service of Sugriva. They are ranging over the earth at Sugriva's command. Of them, some have the strength of ten elephants and some possess the strength of a thousand elephants. Some have the speed of the wind and some are quite irresistible. For your destruction the king of the Kapis will soon come here followed by a vast number of followers like me. When you have incurred enmity with Rama none of the Rakshasas and nothing of Lanka will survive."

Here at the command of Ravana Jamvumali set out for battle. He had a red cloth on and a red garland on his neck and he wore decent ear rings. His eyes were ever revolving. He was unconquerable and haughty and he bent a vast bow like that of Indra, filling all quarters with a thundering sound by the twang of his bow.

Hanuman was then seated on the arch of the gate. Seeing Jamvumali coming in a chariot driven by the asses, Hanuman began to roar in delight. Then a fierce fight ensued between the two. Jamvumali aimed hundred

sharp arrows at Hanuman, and he hit Hanuman's face with two crescents ; head with one Karni, and the two arms with ten Narachas. Hanuman's face was by nature red and being smitten with arrows it grew crimsoned like a big red lotus blooming by the rays of the autumnal sun. He was extremely enraged at this, and he took up a huge stone that lay by him and hurled it with great violence. Thereupon Jamvumali pierced him with ten shafts in great anger. Hanuman finding that huge stone thrown in vain, uprooted a mighty Sala tree and began to whirl it in great speed. Thereupon, Jamvumali showered arrows upon him. He cut down the Sala tree with four arrows, and struck his arms with five shafts and pierced his chest and nipple with ten arrows. Then Hanuman greatly expanded his body, and being exceedingly enraged took up that bolt and hurled it in great violence against his enemy's breast. Jamvumali's head and thighs were crushed by that bolt ; his bows, arrows, horses and chariot and all came to an end.

Then, the Rakshasa King Ravana, was beside himself in rage at the news of Jamvumali's death. His red eyes began to revolve in rage and he immediately asked the sons of his Counsellors to meet Hanuman in fight.

Thereupon, the fiery sons of the Counsellors got themselves ready for battle. They were skilled in arms and were foremost of the warriors. Every one of them was burning with a desire for victory. Then they set out in their chariots adorned with golden net-works, decorated with pennons and flag-staffs and drawn by horses, proceeding with a deep rumbling noise. A good

number of soldiers followed. In delight of battle they began to draw their bows plated with gold. Their mothers hearing about the destruction of the retinue of Ravana became extremely anxious for their lives.

Then the sons of the Counsellors adorned with ornaments hurriedly appeared before the gate and showered arrows like deep rumbling clouds of the rainy season. Then the heroic Hanuman being covered with their arrows became invisible like the Himalayas. At the fall of the snow; he ranged in the clear sky with great speed. As the wind plays with clouds adorned with the rainbow, so Hanuman began to sport with those heroes armed with bows. Then he suddenly displayed his powers against them by startling them with his deep roar. He slapped some of them, fisted some of them, and some of them he tore with his sharp nails and teeth. He slew some of them by striking against their breasts and some by crushing their thighs; some of them fell on the ground being unable to stand his thundering roars.

At this, the soldiers were stricken with panic and ran away in different directions. The elephants roared in fright and horses fell down on the ground, and the field of battle was covered with parts of crushed chariots, broken flag-staffs, torn umbrellas, and blood flowed in torrents. Hanuman again ascended the gate ready for further fight.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE THIRD CLASH

Hearing about the death of the sons of the Counselors with great patience, Ravana recovered the equanimity of mind. Then addressing five captains of his army. Virupaksha, Yupaksha, Durdharsha, Praghosa, and Bhasakarna he said, "Captains ! Soon set out with an army for battle and punish that Vanara, properly while engaged in fight with that Vanara, be always on your alert and act with a due sense of time and place, i.e., with a knowledge of the situation. All that I could gather from his conduct is that he is not an ordinary Vanara ! He must be some other mighty being. I can never believe him to be a Vanara. Perhaps Indra has created him in order to do mischief to me. Many a time have I scored victory over the Gods, Asuras, Nagas, Yakshas and the Maharshis. Now they may do us mischief. I have no more doubts about it. Now go and capture the Vanara by force. Start immediately with your troops and subdue him ; it is not proper to slight a mighty warrior. Before this I have seen many Vanaras, Vali, Sugriva, Jamvuvan, Neela, Dvidida and others but none so irresistible ; nor in intelligence, energy and strength they are like him, nor they can assume such a tall and formidable shape at will. Certainly some other creature has come assuming the shape of a Vanara. Exert yourself to your utmost to chastise him properly. Though the Gods, the Asuras and the human beings cannot stand before you in battle ;

still defend yourself carefully. You see there is no certainty which side will win in war. So be always on your guard."

Then the leaders of the army issued forth with fiery energy. A number of chariots, elephants, and horses followed them.

Here, Hanuman was seated upon the gate like a glaring sun. He was highly intelligent and huge in bulk and was eagerly waiting for the fight. The captains, as soon as they saw him, surrounded him on all sides and attacked him with dreadful weapons. The great hero, Durdharsha discharged five sharp shafts with golden blades like the leaves of a lotus. Being pierced by those arrows Hanuman filled the sky with his terrific roars. Then Durdharsha approached him, by showering arrows upon him. Hanuman stopped him by his roar and being smitten by his arrows, he began to increase in dimension. Then he leaped up to a great height and then fell, like lightning in violent speed on Durdharsha's chariot. Thereupon eight steeds, wheels and poles of the chariot were broken, and Durdharsha was crushed to death.

Hanuman again rose in the sky. Then Virupaksha and Yupaksha angrily approached him and hit his chest with two clubs. Hanuman resisting that blow again descended on the ground and crushed their hands uprooting a huge Sala tree from the ground.

Then the heroic Praghosa approached with a cheerful countenance. Bhasakarna too angrily came forward with a lance, Praghosa threw a Pattisha and Bhasakarna

a lance at Hanuman. Being wounded by that dart and Pattisha, Hanuman began to bleed from all his body, and then he looked red like the newly risen sun. Then he took up a mountain cliff¹ in anger and struck them with it and crushed them into atoms.

Then Hanuman became busy in attacking and destroying those surviving. He slew horse after horse and elephant after elephant. The field of battle became covered with the dead bodies of the Rakshasas, horses, elephants and broken parts of chariots. Hanuman again ascended the gate like Death himself ready to strike.

CHAPTER XXXII

PRINCE AKSHYA

Then Ravana hearing of the destruction of the heroic Captains with their carriers, cast his eyes upon prince Akshya who happened to be before him. Akshya was very eager for fight. Having got the slightest hint from Ravana, he stood up like a tongue of flame fed by clarified butter. He got upon a chariot radiant as the rising sun and embellished with a golden net-work and set out with bow plated with gold. His chariot was adorned with flags (obtained by penance) and jewelled flag-staffs. Eight steeds were carrying it and it was equipped with sky-ranging arms. Eight sharp swords were suspended from golden ropes from eight points of

¹ Literal interpretation does not help us in these things. If we eliminate the supernatural elements it appears something like a guerilla warfare.—Translator.

the chariot and arrows, Saktis and Tomagas, frightful as the sun and the moon, were kept in their proper places. It was unassailable by the Gods and was bright as the lightning. Prince Akshya, mighty as a God, set out in that for fight. The heaven and the earth were filled with the echoes of the neighing of the horses, trumpets of the elephants and of the rumbling noise of the chariot. He came with his army before Hanuman. At that Hanuman shone like the doomsday fire ready to consume everything. He saw Akshya and he gazed at him with admiration and surprise. At that time prince Akshya too looked at him with the cruel stare of a lion. Considering Hanuman's impetuosity and his own prowess he glowed in valour like the sun on the expiration of a cycle of creation. Hanuman was formidable and his prowess was worthy object of sight and he signalled him to fight by throwing three shafts at him. Hanuman was proud of fight, and languor could not touch him. He was skilled in victory and prince Akshya looked at him with winkless eyes.

Then that highly-spirited hero approached Hanuman for battle. The meeting of those two worthy rivals filled the Gods and the Asuras with fear. Seeing them ready to put their prowess to proof, the sun grew dim, the wind ceased to blow, the rocks became restive, the creatures began to shriek in fear, and the sky and the sea were deeply disturbed by their fearful echoes. Prince Akshya was versed and highly skilful in fixing and discharging his arrows in battle and was a sure aim, and as his rage increased he pierced Hanuman's head with

golden shafts. Blood then flowed from Hanuman's head and his eyes began to roll. He looked like the newly risen sun.

Hanuman was glad to meet Akshya in fight and began to increase in bulk. In anger he became incapable of being stared upon like the meridian sun, and it seemed as if he would burn Akshya by the fire of his eyes, and the heroic Akshya looked like a cloud of the rainy season. His bow was shooting incessant arrows like rains upon Hanuman. At this sight Hanuman roared in battle with delight. Prince Akshya was young and his nature was child-like ; he was proud of his strength, his eyes grew red with rage and he approached Hanuman hitting him incessantly with arrows as an elephant approaches a well, concealed in grass. Being smitten by the arrows Hanuman set up a terrible roar, flinging out his arms and his legs, and darted into the sky with fierce energy. Prince Akshya, the Rakshasa hero, ran after him and as the clouds rain hail-stones upon the mountain, so Akshya showered incessant arrows on him. The exceedingly strong Hanuman was swift like the flight of mind, and began to range the sky behind the screen of arrows. Akshya's arrows were thus rendered futile.

Hanuman respectfully gazed at Akshya and thought of the ways of displaying his valour. In the meantime Akshya's arrow in great velocity pierced his side. Hanuman thus being smitten, set up a fiercer roar. He was skilled in battle and thought, "This hero is a boy like the newly risen sun, but he is displaying prow-

ess and valour like a mature man. He is highly skilled in battle, but yet I have no mind to slay him. He is strong, cautious, and possesses great power of endurance. The Saints, Nagas and Yakshas will be surprised by his valour. He is extremely quick and he is now casting repeated glances at me at close quarters without any fear. To speak the truth, even the Gods and the Asuras get frightened by his prowess. If I neglect him in any way surely I shall be defeated then. Besides the prowess of this hero is ever increasing, so it is better to kill him; it is in no way proper to disregard a growing flame."

Thus after discussing about the prowess of the enemy and thinking of the course of his actions, Hanuman decided to slay Akshya. Hanuman smote down eight steeds of Akshya trained in various kinds of movements and capable of carrying heavy loads, and crushed the chariot with its pole and axles by one fist-blow.

Thereupon Akshya jumped upon the ground and then immediately sprang into the sky holding a sword in his hand. It seemed as if a saint was bound for heaven after casting off his body.

Then Hanuman firmly caught hold of the two legs of the hero and whirling him round and round like a snake held by the bird Garuda, dashed him on the ground with violent force. The arms, thighs, waist and chest of Akshya were at once crushed into atoms. No trace of the eyes was visible. Blood flowed in streams and prince Akshya was at once destroyed.

At this Indra and other Gods, Yakshas, Urugas, and the sages gazed upon Hanuman with admiration and astonishment. Hanuman again climbed upon the gate like Death himself ready for destruction.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FOURTH CLASH

The Rakshasa king Ravana was greatly alarmed at the news of Akshya's death. After containing himself with difficulty he spoke to Indrajit, mighty as God :

"My son ! You are the foremost of the heroes ; the Gods and the Asuras are afflicted by your prowess in battle ; the Gods have witnessed your valour and being even under the protection of Indra they could not bear thy onslaught ; you have secured divine arms by the grace of Brahma, the Lord of the creation ; only you never became fatigued in battle ; you are intelligent, you never miss any opportunity, you never ignore time and place ; you are protected by your own valour and ascetic merit. There is no impossible feat for you in the field of battle. Who is there in the three worlds that is not aware of your prowess and skill in arms ? Your valour, your spiritual powers and strength are quite worthy of you, and my mind is never down with anxiety for you thinking that you will be victorious even in an arduous fight. My boy ! The retinue have been destroyed ; Jamvumali, five captains and the sons of the Counsellors have been slain. A number of chariots, elephants and horses have been destroyed ; the heroic Mahadara and prince Akshya have also fallen. But I did not depend on them as I do upon you. Now act, taking into consideration the destruction of the troops, the prowess of the Vanara and your own strength. Do what you think best after considering the strength of your own side and that of the foe, so that the enemy may be chastised. Further I forbid you not to take any troops with you ; they are

dying by numbers at the hands of the Vanara nor use thunderbolt like arms ; that fire-like Vanara is invulnerable to such weapons ; his strength is unimpairable. Now think over what I have said to you and be earnest about victory in battle. You have command over several celestial arms ; think of them and be careful about self-protection. It is not proper for me to send you to such a dangerous situation, but it is sanctioned by the conduct of the Kshatriyas as well as by royal polity. It is proper for a warrior to enquire in what things¹ the enemy is proficient and his efficiency in battle, and it is his duty to endeavour for victory."

Then Indrajit, mighty as a God to set out in order for battle wheeled round his father. Friends and relations present praised him repeatedly and Indrajit became eager for fight. And that effulgent son of Ravana having expansive eyes like the petals of a lotus issued forth like unto the rising of the sea during a Parva.² Then Indrajit of irresistible might got upon a car drawn by four horses of tremendous speed and endowed with strong, sharp teeth. That master of chariot, the foremost of bowmen, the best of the fencers, conversant with the use of all arms, soon proceeded in his car where Hanuman was. And hearing the deep rumbling noise of the car and the twang of his bow, Hanuman felt delighted at his heart. Indrajit rushed towards him with great speed. He set in battle-delight, all the quarters became dark and jackals began to cry. The Nagas,

1 Branches of learning on Shastras.—T.

2 The 8th and 14th day of each lunar month.—T.

Yakshas, Maharshis, the *Siddhyas*, the heavenly bodies and the birds gathered under the sky began to make a great noise.

Hanuman began to emit heroic roars and became dilated in rage seeing Indrajit's car, having a flag like that of Indra, approaching quickly. Indrajit held a wonderful bow, bright as lightning, and he began to flourish and stretch it, producing a deep rumbling sound like the thunder. Then began a conflict between two formidable rivals, both were strong, fearless and quick. It seemed as if the lord of the Devas¹ and the lord of the Asuras had met each other in fight.

Then the great hero, Indrajit began to shoot his arrows against Hanuman, and Hanuman after baffling them got into the sky and began to tread in the passage of his father, the Wind-God. Thereupon Indrajit discharged sharp, feathered arrows painted in gold, with the velocity of lightning. The field of battle was filled with the rattling sound of the chariot and with the sound of bugles, drums and twangs of the bow. Hanuman again got into the sky, and he would at first stand before the arrows and then as soon as they were discharged, he would soar in the sky and would move beyond the range of those arrows. Both were quick, both were heroic, and one became unbearable to the other. Seeing the enemy thus, unhurt though aimed at with infallible arrows Indrajit began to think. He found that Hanu-

1 Suras and Asuras represented two rival branches of the Aryan people and there was continual hostility between the two sections, and victory was sometimes on this side and sometimes on the other.—T.

man could not be slain, so he began to think of some means by which he could be bound. He then discharged the weapon given to him by Brahma, not to kill Hanuman but to bind him down. Thus Hanuman's hands and feet were bound, and he became motionless and fell on the ground. Though bound up by the weapon, of Brahma, he depended upon the grace of Brahma, and thought of the former's blessings towards him. He thought it was impossible to free himself from the bondage of that weapon of Brahma, the lord of the creation. So he must endure it for some time. Hanuman then recollected Brahma's boons towards him and realised that he would be soon set free. Thinking all this, he respectfully submitted to the chastisement of Brahma. He further recollected, "Brahma, Indra and the Wind-God are ever protecting me. Therefore I am lying here in bondage without any fear. Now it will be of great advantage to me if the Rakshasas now take me in, for I shall then be able to talk to Ravana. So let the enemies take me now without any further delay."

Then the Rakshasas secured him by force and used various abusive expressions towards him. Hanuman gave up all efforts and began to groan. Then the Rakshasas began to bind him firmly with ropes spun from jute and the bark of trees. Hanuman thought, "If Ravana would like to see me out of curiosity, then my object will be attained." Thus thinking he bore the pain of bondage and the abuses.

In the meantime, he was suddenly released from the bondage by the blessings of Brahma. Then Hanuman was beaten by the dreadfully strong-fisted Rakshasas.

Ravana was seated in the Assembly-hall surrounded by the ministers and the courtiers, when Indrajit appeared before him taking Hanuman with him. Hanuman looked like an infuriated elephant tied in chains. On seeing him the Rakshasas repeatedly asked, "Who is this Vanara? Whose son is he? Whence and why has he come? At whose assurance has he become so fearless?"

Many angrily remarked, "Kill this villain instantly." "Burn him, devour him," cried out some. Then the grim-visaged Rakshasas began to drag Hanuman to and fro. The spirited Hanuman then beheld Ravana seated in a jewelled room with old counsellors at his feet. His eyes were rolling in anger and at the sight of Hanuman he beckoned his counsellors—well-behaved and born of highly respectable families—to ascertain his identity and they interrogated Hanuman at whose instance he had come and his object of coming to Lanka. Hanuman replied, "I am an emissary of Sugriva, the lord of the Kapis, and have come here at his command."

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN THE PRESENCE OF RAVANA

Ravana, the Rakshasa lord, was seated in the royal assembly-hall. His golden diadem was studded with pearls and his person was adorned with diamonds and precious gems. He was smeared with red sandal paste, and he wore a very costly piece of silk. His eyes were red and dreadful, his teeth were firm and white, and his lips were hanging. As the Mandara shines with its summits, so he appeared exceedingly beautiful with his ten heads. His hue was of collyrium-blue, and he had a gold

chain on his breast. He looked like a mass of clouds tinged by the rays of the sun. His arms were smeared with sandal paste and adorned with Angada, that looked like a penta-headed snake. His seat was made of crystal, wrought with gems, and covered with a sheet. A number of beautiful damsels were fanning him with chowris.

Durdhara, Prahasta, Mahaparsha and Nikumbha—those four counsellors—were seated at a short distance from him, while other counsellors of beautiful appearance were consoling him with their assurances.

Hanuman smarting under the bondage, in great astonishment gazed at him with red-hot eyes. Being dazed by Ravana's effulgence, Hanuman mused within his mind, "O, how beautiful is this hero ! What patience, what strength, what beauty and what auspicious marks does he possess ! If he were not vicious, then he could have been the protector of heaven, nay even of Indra. But his acts are cruel and ugly, this is why even the Gods and the Asuras are frightened by his sight. This hero being angry can reduce the earth into sea."

Seeing the spirited Hanuman before him, Ravana grew restive. There were many misgivings in his mind, and he thought, "Is he the worshipful Nandi¹ who being angry at my jeering at him cursed me in the Kailasa. has come here in the form of a Vanara, or is he Vana himself, the King of the Asuras ?"

Thus debating in his mind, Ravana with red-hot

1 An attendant of Siva, whom Ravana formerly laughed at for his monkey-like face -T.

eyes said to Prabasta, "Ask that villain whence and why he has come here. What is the reason of his breaking the trees? My city is quite inaccessible; why has he entered it? What is the cause of his fight with the Rakshasas?"

Thereupon, Prahasta at the command of Ravana told Hanuman, "Take heart, O Vanara. Tell the truth: Has not Indra sent you to this city of Lanka? Don't be afraid, you will be immediately set at liberty. Tell me whether you are an emissary of Kuvera, Yama or Varuna? Have you entered the city at their directions secretly by assuming the form of a Vanara? Or has Vishnu ever longing for victory sent you here? You only look like a Vanara, but in valour you are not like one of the race of the Vanaras. Tell the truth, and you will at once be set free. But if you tell lies, you will be put to death."

Then Hanuman said to Ravana, "I am not a secret spy of Indra, Yama or Varuna, I have no friendship with Kuvera, nor has Lord Vishnu set me hither. I am a real Vanara and belong to the race of the Vanaras. I have come here just to have a sight of you but finding it difficult to get access to you, I have destroyed the pleasure garden. Then the Rakshasas came to fight with me and I fought against them for self-defence. On account of the boon from Brahma, even the Gods and the Asuras cannot bind me, but I have suffered myself thus to be tied down just for having a sight of you. And the Rakshasas have brought me in your presence. I am a messenger of the heroic Rama and listen to what I say for your own good."

"O King! I have come to you at the command of Sugriva, the Lord of the Kapis. That Sugriva enquires after your welfare. Listen what he has communicated to you for your good in this world as well as in the next."

"In Ayodhya there was a King named Dasaratha. He ruled over the subjects as their father. Rama is his eldest son, and he with his brother, Lakshmana, and his wife, Janaki, came to the Dandaka forest at the command of his father. The pious Rama missed his wife in Janasthana. In the course of his search for Janaki, Rama with Lakshmana arrived at the Rishyamuka hill and became acquainted with Sugriva. Sugriva promised to find out the whereabouts of Janaki and Rama too promised to confer the Vanara kingdom on him. Then slaying Vali with one shaft, Rama gave Sugriva the lordship over the Vanaras and the Bhallukas, O Rakshasa Chief, you know Vali very well, and Rama slew him with a single shaft."

"Then Sugriva eager for the search of Janaki, sent the Vanaras in various directions. Host of Vanaras are searching for Janaki on land and air. Of them, some are like Garuda in speed and some are irresistible as the wind. For Janaki, I have crossed hundred Yojanas of the sea and have come here to see you. I am begotten of the Wind-God and my name is Hanuman. While wandering forth hither and thither I beheld Janaki in your place. You are cognisant of righteousness, you covet for wealth and have secured plenty through your ascetic powers. So it is not proper for you to confine another's wife. An intelligent person like you is never

engaged in acts which are unjust and injurious. O king ! There is none in the three worlds who can be happy by incurring hostility with Rama. The Gods and the Asuras cannot stand before the arrows, shot by Rama and Lakshmana in anger. So listen to my words conducive to your good for all times and return Janaki to Rama. I have met with Janaki here. It is difficult to have a sight of her. I have seen her and Rama will do the rest. Janaki is afflicted with sorrow, and you know not that she is residing in your place like a penta-headed snake (for your destruction). You see, as one cannot digest poison by his power of assimilating food, so it is not at all easy even for the Gods and the Asuras to hush up everything by confining her in secrecy.

"By virtue of religious penances, you have acquired long life and divine prosperity, but you should not spoil that merit by marrying another's wife. It is for your virtue that you are incapable of being destroyed by the Gods and the Asuras. But Sugriva, the King of the Kapis is not a God, Yaksha, or a Rakshasa ; by race he is a Vanara and Rama is a human being. Tell me how you will protect yourself from them. Happiness is the reward of virtue. It is seldom possible to enjoy happiness along with pain of the fruit of vice, nor can former virtue nullify subsequent vice. O king, you have enjoyed sufficient happiness in the past. Now you will have to suffer immensely. Many a Rakshasa has lost life in Janasthana. The great hero Vali has fallen on the field of battle, and Rama has contracted friendship with Sugriva. Now just think what may be good for you. You see, I can alone destroy the

city of Lanka with its elephants and horses, but Rama has not given me any direction for it. He would himself destroy the abductor of his wife,—thus he swore before the Vanara and the Bhallukas. King of the Rakshasas ! You are only an ordinary person. Even Indra himself can't be happy by incurring hostility with Rama. She, whom you know to be Janaki and who is confined in your abode, is the fatal Night that forebodes destruction to Lanka ! Don't have that noose of Death in the form of Sita round your neck. Do thou rather think of thy welfare. You will soon find Lanka on flames fed by thy wrath of Rama and consumed by the energy of Sita. Don't bring ruin for your own fault upon your sons, wives, counsellors and friends. Don't lose immense wealth. I am by race a Vanara. I am an emissary and servant of Rama. What I tell you is true ; listen to my words. The heroic Rama can recreate the world after destroying it. His prowess is like that of Vishnu. None amongst the Gods, Asuras, Yakshas, Urugas, Vidyadharas, Gandharvas, Siddhyas, Kinnaras or amongst beasts and birds can be his match. It will be extremely difficult for you to save your life after doing harm to him, the lord of the three worlds and the king of kings. There is none in the three worlds who can challenge him in battle ; neither Brahma himself, nor Rudra, the destroyer of Tripura, nor Indra, the king of Gods, can stand before his shaft."

CHAPTER XXXV

RAVANA'S REPLY

Then Ravana, the king of the Rakshasas, became greatly enraged at these words of Hanuman. His red-hot eyes began to roll, and he at once ordered the executioners to put Hanuman to death. Hanuman was an envoy and Vibhishana could not approve of his death sentence. But Ravana was beside himself in rage and finding the death of an envoy almost imminent, Vibhishana began to reflect what was to be done to pacify his worshipful elder brother. He then said, "O Lord! Please stop: Kindly listen to my words. Those kings who can judge about the gravity and levity of acts never intend to put envoys to death. This is against righteousness and custom, so it is not at all proper for you. You are virtuous, wise and well-versed in politics. If a man like you is swayed by anger, mastery over the Shastras and all toil in order to attain it, are in vain. Be pleased and consider what is right and wrong."

Then Ravana enraged with Vibhishana's words said, "O hero! There is no sin in putting a sinful person to death, so I shall immediately put him to death."

Hearing those unjust words of Ravana, Vibhishana with sound words began, "O king, be propitious; listen to my just and well-meaning words. My Lord! An envoy is not to be put to death at the time of discharging his duties. True, he is a formidable enemy and much mischief has been committed by him, yet none will approve of his death. Whipping, disfiguring the body, or shaving the head (by way of insult), all these punishments have been sanctioned towards the envoy

but, we have never heard of the sentence of death being passed upon an envoy. Your goal is righteousness, you can fully judge what is good or bad. So anger is indeed reprehensible in a person like you. Those who are wise never indulge in angry passion. Neither in religious discussion nor in social customs, nor in the right interpretation of the Shastras, there is any who can approach you. O hero ! You are, in truth, the foremost amongst the Gods and the Asuras. You will reap the fruit by putting the Vanara to death. You should punish him who has sent him hither. You see, this Vanara has been sent by another person ; he has come with another's words, he is not independent ; hence it is not proper to put him to death. O king ! If this one is slain, no other sky-ranger would come¹ to Lanka. So you should not put him to death. Rather slay Indra and other Gods ; that will immensely prove your prowess. Besides, those two human princes are haughty and hostile to you, and if this Vanara is put to death, who will incite them to battle ? I don't find any one else. At this moment, the Rakshasas are impatient to display their valour, don't disappoint them by putting obstacles to it. They are ever obedient servants and always think of your welfare. They are devoted to you and are intent upon your well-being ; born of high families, they are the foremost of the warriors. Surely, having those fiery heroes on your side, the glory of victory will be yours. So let a section of the force march this day under your orders

1 Another reading :—"I don't see any other who can arrive at this city of Lanka."—T.

and bring those foolish princes here. It is desirable on all hands to show your valour to your enemy."

Thereupon, the lord of the Rakshasas, the potent enemy of the celestials, accepted the excellent words of his younger brother.

CHAPTER XXXVI

LANKA IN FLAMES

Hearing those well-meaning words of Vibhishana Ravana said, "O hero! You have said what is right; it is improper to kill an envoy, but it has become expedient to punish him somehow. You see the tail is dear to the Vanaras and it is their ornament, so burn it soon. When he will return with the burnt tail¹, his friends and acquaintances will find him disfigured and crest-fallen." Thus awarding this sentence to Hanuman, addressing the Rakshasas Ravana said, "Soon set fire to the tail of this Vanara, when his tail will be on flames carry him on shoulders all over the city."

Thereupon, at the command of Ravana, the angry Rakshasas began to wrap his tail with torn cotton fabrics. In the meantime, Hanuman began to be dilated, as fire grows in volume fed by dried woods of forest. The Rakshasas then sprinkled oil over his tail and set fire to it. Hanuman grew angry and began to strike the Rakshasas with his flaming tail. Then Rakshasas began to bind Hanuman. Then, all the Rakshasas—old,

1 Evidently it refers to a monkey of *Simia Sinica* species. The general conviction, however, is that Hanuman is not an ape or monkey. The probability is great that he was a man.—T.

young, male and female—became exceedingly glad at that sight. Then Hanuman thought, "Though I am in bondage now, yet the Rakshasas won't be able to stand my might. I shall tear off this bondage and kill all of them. They have bound me at the command of the wicked Ravana but they could not deal with me adequately for the wrong I have done for the benefit of Rama. To tell the truth, I can alone destroy all the Rakshasas, but Rama will do it himself. So I should suffer this bondage for some time. Now let the Rakshasas range Lanka with me. At night, I could not see inaccessible places; I shall see them in course of this. Let the Rakshasas bind me. I am suffering no doubt from the burning of my tail, but my mind is not any way overcome."

Then, the Rakshasas in great delight took Hanuman in their custody and proclaimed about the punishment by blowing conch-shells and trumpets. Hanuman, carried on their backs, saw with delight variegated cars, enclosed courtyards, well-laid terraces, streets thronged with edifices, crossings, bye-ways and the interiors of dwellings. The Rakshasas proclaimed him as a spy all along the high-ways and public roads.

In the meantime, the ugly-looking Rakshasis went to Janaki and said, "The Rakshasas have set fire to the tail of the red-face Vanara with whom you were talking, and he is being dragged along through different streets."

Thereupon, Janaki grew extremely sad at this unpleasant news, and praying with devoutness to the Fire that burnt closed to her, she said, "If I have ever served my husband, if I am chaste, if I have any

religious merit, if I have been the devoted wife of one alone, then prove yourself cool to Hanuman."

Thereupon that Fire began to burn in flames bending towards the right, and the fire burning in Hanuman's tail grew soothing and cool as snow. Then Hanuman mused, "Fire is burning in my tail, but why does it not burn my body? Its flame is intensely glowing, yet why do I not feel any pain? Why does contact of fire at the end of my tail feel cool as snow? I can easily discern that it is due to Rama's prowess. It is due to his prowess that I found the Mainaka in the midst of the sea when I crossed it. If the sea and the hill Mainaka could have behaved like that for Rama, there is no wonder that Fire will appear cool as snow. However, it is for Janaki's affection, Rama's valour and for Fire's friendship with my father, that he is not burning me."

Hanuman again thought, "What! Low fellows like the Rakshasas to bind one like me at last? If I have any prowess at all, I should teach them a proper lesson." Thinking thus, the great hero snapped his bonds and with one mighty spring got upon the high gate—lofty as a cliff. There was no crowd of the Rakshasas at that place. Getting there, he contracted his body within a moment, and the remaining of his bonds spontaneously slipped from him. He again grew tall. Eyeing and casting his glance around hither and thither and round, he saw a huge bolt standing against the gate. Taking that iron bolt in his hand he destroyed the sentries there. His tail was blazing at that time and he looked like the glaring sun quite incapable of being gazed at and he repeatedly cast his looks upon Lanka.

Hanuman then glowed with energy and thought, "What remains to be done? How shall I punish the Rakshasas more? I have broken the pleasure-garden, destroyed the Rakshasa heroes and also a part of the army. Now destruction of the forts remains and when it is done, my labours will be crowned with success. By further slight efforts it will be accomplished. Fire is burning on my tail, and I shall propitiate it by burning the houses."

Thereupon, the mighty Vanara with his burning tail, resembling a cloud with lightning, began to range with undaunted heart from house to house, from palace to palace, from garden to garden. Then the hero springing with the velocity of wind set fire to the house of Prahasta. At a short distance from it was Mahaparsha's dwelling and he jumped over it. The house began to burn as if with the doomsday-fire. Then Hanuman, darting up, set fire to the dwellings of Vajradanshtra, Suka, Sarana, Indrajit, Jamvumali, Rasmiketu, Surya-Shatru, Hrawskarma, Danshtra, Ramasha, Yodhanmatta, Matta, Dhvajagriva, Vidyutjihva, Ghora, Hastimukha, Karala, Vishala, Shonitaksha, Kumbhakarna, Makaraksha, Narantaka, Kumbha, Nikumbha, Yajna-Shatru and Brahma-Shatru. In succession he burnt all the houses leaving that of Vibhishana alone. The mansions of those Rakshasas were reared with great costs and they were reduced to ashes with their immense wealth. Gradually Hanuman approached the royal palace.

It was high as the Mandara hill and adorned with jewels and Hanuman having set fire to it by his flaming tail, began to roar like a cloud that might rise on the

day of dissolution. And that fire being fed by the wind began to spread on all sides, and at that time it seemed as if doomsday fire was going to reduce everything to ashes. Then big mansions wrought with pearls and gems and furnished with golden nets began to crumble down, as if the Siddhas were falling down from the heaven at the expiry of their religious reward. Groans and shrieks rose from all sides and the Rakshasas gave up in despair all attempts to save their wealth and properties and ran out of their dwellings. It seemed as if Agni or the God of fire came in the guise of a Vanara. Women, with sucking babies on their breasts, tumbled down into flame with tearful eyes, some were surrounded on all sides by the tongues of fire, and hairs of some were dishevelled and those fair damsels, when they fell looked like bright lightning darting from the sky.

Hanuman saw various kinds of metals mixed up with diamonds, pearls, corals and lapis streaming down like liquids by the heat of that fire. As fire is never satiated by burning dry logs and grass, so Hanuman was not at all satisfied by the destruction of the Rakshasas, and Hanuman looked like God Rudra burning down Tripura. The flame of that terrific fire ascended to the summit of the Trikuta Mountain on which Lanka did rest. Its flames were sootless and kissed the sky; it covered Lanka, with the glare of million suns, and rent the earth with thundering sounds. The tongues of flame were exceedingly red like the Kinsuka blossoms, and clouds of smoke rising out of extinguished flame resembled blue in hue. The Rakshasas were greatly frightened by this and began to talk amongst themselves. "Either he is

the thunder-bolt-armed Indra, or Yama, or Varuna or the Wind-God, or fire generated by the third eye of Rudra, or Suryya (Sun) or Chandra (Moon) or Kuvera. This is no Vanara but Death himself, or this Rakshasa-destroying fire is Brahma himself, the great Sire of all and the Disposer of all destinies. Or is this Vishnu's energy, incomprehensible, unutterable, infinite that has assumed this form by virtue of Maya?¹ Seeing the City thus consumed with its residents, houses, horses, cars, beasts, birds and trees, the Rakshasas began to lament: "O father! O son! O love! O friend! O my love! O my husband! Alas! All virtue has come to an end." Thus lamenting, the Rakshasas created a great row. And Lanka surrounded by flames, with her heroes fallen, looked like the world burning with the fire of Brahma, or like an object blighted by the imprecation of a curse.

Then Hanuman saw the panic-stricken Rakshasas and after burning Lanka he thought of Rama.

Then, the Gods praised Hanuman, and the Saints, Gandharvas and the Vidyadharas were mightily pleased with his deed. Hanuman took his seat on the roof of a palace. He then glowed like the sun. After accomplishing his object, he extinguished the fire of his tail with the waters of the sea.

¹ Maya is neither illusion, nor magic, as is often wrongly interpreted; it is the materialising energy of God, i.e., the physical basis of the manifested world of the senses.—Translator.

CHAPTER XXXVII

HANUMAN'S ANXIETY

After the burning of Lanka, Hanuman began to reflect and grew highly apprehensive and thought, "What an iniquitous act have I committed by burning down Lanka. Blessed are those high-souled people who can control their angry passions by dint of their good sense, like fire quenched by water. What evil cannot be effected by anger? An angry person can even kill the worshipful and vilify the pious with rude expressions. The angry cannot decide what to speak and what not to speak. There is no sin that cannot be committed by them. He is a real man who can cast off his anger as the snakes cast off their sloughs. O shame to me! I am vicious, shameless and the perpetrator of a great crime and the destroyer of my master. Without thinking of Janaki I have burnt down Lanka. If the whole of Lanka has been burnt down, certainly Janaki has been consumed with it. Alas! I have unwittingly spoilt my master's cause. I have defeated his object. By burning down Lanka I have not saved Janaki. The burning of Lanka is no doubt trifling, but in my anger I have lost my great object. Forsooth, Janaki has been consumed by fire, for I do not find any spot in the whole city that has not been devastated by fire. Due to my stupidity I have defeated my master's object. Now, I shall enter either into flames or into the sea, full of sharks and crocodiles, and I shall offer my body to them. I have spoilt the whole thing. With what face shall I now appear before Sugriva, Rama and Lakshmana? It is notorious in the three worlds that a Vanara is fickle

and restless, and I have betrayed my national character through anger. Fie on activity born of impetuous passion, which is the cause of all rashness and incompetency ! Alas ! Though capable, yet I did not protect Sita. I have through my culpable passion furnished an illustration of the reckless monkey-nature which is notorious over the three worlds. On Sita's destruction both (Rama and Lakshmana) will cease to live and on their death Sugriva will die with his friends. And on receiving these news how will Bharata, devoted to his brother, and Satrughna live ? Thus the Ikshwaku race being extinct, all the people will be overwhelmed with grief. I have, therefore, due to my bad luck, lost all virtue, and being under the baneful influence of passion have become the cause of the destruction of good many lives."

As he was musing thus, he thought of the auspicious omens which he had witnessed since, and thus said within, "Or it may be that the lady of graceful limbs has been preserved by her own virtuous energy, for fire does not burn fire, and fire will not touch the spouse of that virtuous one of immeasurable energy and strength, who is further protected by her own pious acts. The bearer of sacrificial offerings has not burnt me simply owing to Rama's prowess and virtue of Janaki. But why should he, who is a worshipful deity unto Bharata and other princes, and who is the consort of Rama after his own mind, be destroyed at all ? Indestructible fire can reduce everything into ashes, but it has not burnt my tail, then why should Sita be consumed ?"

Then, Hanuman with wonder and awe thought of

seeing the Mainaka in the midst of the sea, and he mused that Sita by her devotion, truthfulness and righteousness could even burn fire, but fire could not burn her.

Hanuman was thus thinking about Janaki's virtue ; in the meantime he heard the birds thus to converse : "What an awful thing has been committed by the conflagration of the houses of the Rakshasas ! The old, and the young and women are crying. They have created arrow in panic and are anxious and restless.

"It seems the splendour of Lanka has forsaken the city. But what a wonder ! The city has been burnt, but Janaki has escaped quite unscathed."

Hearing these words, sweet as nectar, Hanuman was mightily pleased ; and from the auspicious omens he saw and what he had heard from the saints, Hanuman concluded that undoubtedly Janaki was alive. Thus thinking he again proceeded towards the Sinsapa tree.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SIGHT OF JANAKI

Thereafter, Hanuman on arriving at the Sinsapa tree found Janaki seated under the tree. Then greeting her respectfully, he said, "O worshipful lady ! It is due to my good luck that I find you quite safe."

Then Janaki repeatedly looked at him and finding him about to go away, affectionately said, "My child ! If you wish you may stop here just for a day. After taking rest in some secret place you may start on the next day. Even your sight beguiles me of my sorrow for the time being. You are going now, surely to come back, but in the meantime my life may come to an

end. My mind is exceedingly sad, and I am suffering untold misery, and your absence will grieve me more. O hero ! I have grave doubts about one thing. The heroic Sugriva has no doubt vast Vanara and Bhalluka hosts to help, but how will he cross the sea with his army along with Rama and Lakshmana ? Excepting you, Garuda and the Wind I do not find any body capable of doing this. You are skilled, in everything, but how will this difficult task be accomplished ? All praise to your valour, you can yourself easily accomplish the deed, but it will be worthy of his heroism, if Rama himself comes and rescues me. What shall I say more, my child, encourage him about it."

Then Hanuman hearing this reasonable speech of Janaki said, "O worshipful lady ! That lord and foremost of Vanaras, Sugriva, gifted with strength is determined on thy behalf. And that master of Vanaras, Sugriva, O Vaidehi, surrounded by thousands and millions of Vanaras, shall speedily come here (for the purpose) and those best of men, those heroes, Rama and Lakshmana coming together, shall afflict Lanka with their arrows. And slaughtering the Rakshasas by his own valour, Raghu's son, O exceedingly fair one, will take you back to his palace. O gentle damsel, do thou console thyself, expecting that hour. Soon shalt thou see Ravana slain in battle by Rama. On the lord of Rakshasas being slain along with his sons, councillors, and friends, thou shalt meet Rama as Rohini meeteth with the moon. Soon shall Kakutstha come accompanied by the foremost of Vanaras—who conquering Ravana in conflict, shall remove thy grief." Having thus con-

soled Videha's daughter Hanuman, son of the Wind-God, setting his heart upon departure, saluted Vaidehi. And having soothed Vaidehi and having rendered the city disconsolate, displaying his surpassing strength and having baffled Ravana exhibiting his terrific might and saluting Vaidehi, Hanuman became bent upon returning crossing the sea. Then that repressor of foes, the powerful Vanara, eager to see his master ascended Aristha, the foremost of mountains (as if covered with a sheet), consisting of blue woods of tall Padmakas and clouds lying in the interspace between the peaks, discovered by the gay light of the sun; abounding with minerals scattered about, serving for its eyes; seemed which to be reciting aloud in consequence of the solemn sound of waters, to be carolling through its many fountains, and to stay with uplifted arms by means of the Devadarus appearing to be weeping distractedly on account of cascades sounding all around; and seemed also to be treming in consequence of verdant autumnal woods waving, and to be piping on account of the Kichakas vocal through the breeze, noisy with poisonous serpents; appearing to be buried in contemplation on account of caverns covered with snow and looking solemn in consequence; seeming to yawn in the sky with peaks towering heaven-wards, graced with marble caves; surrounded with Sals, Palms, Tamalas, Kanas and bamboos; adorned with spreading and flowing under woods; abounding with various beasts, and dissected with mineral streams, containing numerous hills, thronged with crags, frequented by Maharshis, and Yaksins and Gandharvas and Kinnaras, and Serpents, impassable

in consequence of plants and trees with caves harbouring lions ; filled with tigers and other ferocious beasts ; and furnished with trees having tasteful fruits and roots ascending that mountain. And on the lovely level of that mountain, the crags crushed with sounds under the tread of that one burning to behold Rama and wrought up with excess of joy, were scattered all around. Ascending that lofty hill, Hanuman greatly dilated his body to cross from the Southern to Northern shore of the sea.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HANUMAN LEAVES LANKA

After getting to the top of the mountain, the son of the Wind-God cast his look upon the dreadful main inhabited by terrible snakes. Then the hill being sore pressed by the foremost of the Vanaras began to groan in pain and with various creatures on it began to sink beneath the earth. Its peaks were tottering and trees began to topple down. Borne down by his violence the flowery trees fell on the ground as if destroyed by Indra's thunder-bolt, and dreadful yells of lions pierced the sky. The Nymphs with their apparel slipping from them and jewellery in disorder at once rose from the hill into the sky ; dreadful snakes of virulent poison with flaming tongues and expanded hoods began to roll in the dust. The Gandharvas, the Yakshas and the Vidyardharas left the hill in pain, took shelter in the sky. And the hill ten yojanas long and thirty in height became one with the ground. And Hanuman being desirous of crossing the billowy ocean in great speed rose to the sky.

The firmament looked like the deep sea, where the Gandharvas and the Rakshasas were like blooming lotuses, the moon-like lily, Lishya and Travana like the swans, the clouds like its ocean, the star Punarvasu like the fish, Bhauma like the crocodile, Airavata like its island, the breeze like its billows and stars its Karandavas, and the moonlight like gentle transparent water. Hanuman easily crossed that sea-like welkin by his speed; he seemed to swallow the planets and break the moon into pieces. He drew to him clouds of different hues by his velocity and at times he became concealed behind the clouds and at times came out of them. He resounded all quarters by his deep roars and reached the middle of the sea on his way. He simply touched the Mainaka hill and thence shot like an arrow discharged from the bow. From a distance he beheld the mountain on the beach. In great delight he set up a roar and made his way quickly to the shore. He became delighted at the prospect of meeting his friends and brandished his tail in joy. His roars seemed to rend the sky with its dew and the moon.

At that time the Vanaras were anxiously waiting for Hanuman on the northern shore and from a distance they heard his roars like the rumbling of clouds and felt the speed of his course. As soon as they heard that noise they all became anxious for his sight. In the meantime, Jamvuvān addressing the Vanaras cheerfully said, "Surely Hanuman has been crowned with success or such a noise would not have been heard."

Then the Vanaras jumped in joy, and many of them in order to behold Hanuman moved from one peak to

another peak, from one branch of the tree to another branch. Some of them ascended on the tree tops and began to wave¹ pieces of white cloth in delight.

Here, Hanuman was advancing like the roaring wind. The Vanaras joined their palms at his sight. And Hanuman with a great noise fell upon the peak like a mountain clipped of its wings.

The Vanaras were extremely glad at his sight and they surrounded him immediately. Every one's face was bright with joy. Many of them roared in delight. They began to chatter greatly. Some of them broke down branches of the trees to prepare his seat.

Then, Hanuman bowed down to Jamvuvan and other superiors and to prince Angada. They welcomed him and gazed upon him with cheerful heart. Then Hanuman briefly narrated information about Janaki, and then taking Angada's hand he sat down in a beautiful spot in the wood and valley of the Mahendra hill and being questioned he gave a brief account of his deeds : "O Vanaras ! I have seen the worshipful Janaki, in the Asoka forest. She is surrounded by dreadful Rakshasis. She is extremely weak and lean on account of fasting. She wears a single braid of hair, and has become highly anxious for the sight of Rama."

The Vanaras hearing these nectar-like sweet words became exceedingly glad. Some chattered, and some roared in delight. Some brandished their tails; some

¹ It is like the modern European custom of waving handkerchiefs to friends—specially when a train leaves or enters the platform.—T.

shook their long tails, and most of them jumped from the hill and touched Hanuman in joy.

Then Angada said, "O hero ! I do not find anybody equal to you in valour or bravery, since you have succeeded in coming back after crossing the vast sea. To speak the truth, you are the saviour of our lives. Now, being successful, with your help we shall appear before Rama. Wonderful is thy devotion to your master and wonderful is thy patience : owing to good luck you have gathered whereabouts of Janaki, and due to good luck Rama will be absolved from the pangs of Sita's separation."

Then the Vanaras in delightful heart surrounded prince Angada, Hanuman, and Jamvuvan and sat on a spacious tableland, in order to hear everything in detail with joined palms.

CHAPTER XL

RECITAL OF THE EXPLOITS

Then Jamvuvan in delightful mind asked, "O hero ! How could you find the worshipful Janaki in the Asoka forest ? How, does she fare there and how does the cruel Ravana behave with her ? How could you get the clue of Janaki ? What did she say ? Tell us everything in detail. After hearing that we shall decide our course of action. And now tell us too what we shall conceal from Rama and what we shall report to him."

Thereupon Hanuman bowing down to Janaki in his mind cheerfully began :

"You see, in order to cross the sea I rose into the sky, in your presence, from the Mahendra hill. There were

great obstacles on my way. At one place, I found a golden mountain obstructing my way. I considered it to be formidable; afterwards nearing it I thought of forcing my way through it. Thinking this I struck it with my tail and it at once crumbled into pieces. Then that mountain assuming the form of a human being said, 'My boy! I am a friend of the Wind-God, so your uncle. I live in this ocean; my name is Mainaka. Formerly, the mountains had wings and they could travel wherever they wished. Afterwards Indra clipped their wings. My boy! At that time, my wings were saved through your father's help. He threw me down into the sea. Now, it is my duty to help Rama. Rama is virtuous and a great hero.' Then with the permission of the hill I proceeded to my destination and the Mainaka disappeared. Then Surasa, the Mother of the Nagas, rose from the sea and appeared before me.

She said, "Oh, Kapi chief, the gods have ordained you as my food, so I shall devour you."

At this, I grew pale with fear and entreated her with folded palms saying that I had been engaged by Rama as an envoy to search for Sita.¹

But Surasa at first did not yield, she expanded her mouth and I contracted my body, and emerged out of her jaws by assuming the size of a thumb. Thereupon the denizens of the sky eulogised me, and I left the place at the speed of an eagle. Again I was thwarted in my career, but I could not see anything whatsoever. On my eyes downward, I noted a dreadful Rakshasi

1 Repetition of the former details already mentioned has been omitted.—T.

rising out of the waves. She wanted to devour me and I at once agreed to her proposal : I expanded my body, and she opened her mouth. Instantly I contracted my body, entered into her mouth and came out by tearing her breast, and the formidable Rakshasi gave up her ghost stretching her arms on the sea. Then finding my way interrupted by various obstacles I doubled my speed and within a short time got view of the rocky southern beach. There stood Lanka. I entered the city at night in disguise. On my way, I was accosted by a formidable dark woman with flaming hair. She wanted to kill me, but I overcame her with one blow of fist. Thereupon she said that she was the guardian deity of the Rakshasas, and since I could subdue her by my strength the destruction of the Rakshasas was imminent, she prophesied.

Then, through the night I ranged through the palace of Ravana, but couldn't find Janaki. I was stricken with grief. At that time I noticed a wooded garden surrounded by a golden wall. There was a huge Sinsapa tree in its midst. On ascending the tree I saw plantain groves of golden hue. At a short distance from it was seated Janaki. She had only a piece of cloth on her body, her hair was stained with dust and gathered into a single braid. She was lean with fasting and looked like a lotus withered in snow.¹ She was surrounded on all sides by grim Rakshasis, just like a fawn surrounded by a pack of blood-thirsty wolves. She hates Ravana and has resolved to give up her

1 I have changed winter into snow, and tigers into wolves.

life. In the meantime I heard jingling sounds of ornaments and anklets mixed up with the noise of several voices. I at once contracted my body and hid myself behind the leaves of the tree.

Then, the Rakshasa king, Ravana arrived there with his wives. At his sight, Janaki drew her thighs close together and covered her breasts with her hands. She trembled with fear and cast frightened looks hither and thither. Ravana then approached her and said, "O Janaki! I greet thee by bowing down my head. Please have regard for me, but if you slight me through your pride, surely I shall drink your blood two months after."

Thereupon, Janaki angrily replied, "O Villain! I am the spouse of heroic Rama and daughter-in-law of king Dasaratha. I wonder why your tongue did not crumble into pieces for uttering those words? O sinful wretch! Shame to your prowess, since you took me in the absence of Rama. In no respect thou art equal to Rama. You are not even worthy of being his valet. Rama is invincible and truthful." *

Ravana, at these harsh words of Janaki, burned with rage like a funeral pyre, and by revolving his cruel eyes began to beat her with his right fist. His companions shrieked at this. Then Dhanyamalini came near and preventing him said, "What will you do with that Janaki? Come, enjoy yourself with me. Janaki is in no way superior to me either in beauty or in accomplishments. Be content with the daughters of the Gods and Yakshas. What will you do with Janaki?"

Then that woman led Ravana away. After that a number of Rakshasis began to abuse her in harsh words.

Janaki slighted their words like a piece of straw. Thus they were disappointed and soon after they fell asleep from exhaustion. In the meantime, a Rakshasi name Trijata suddenly roused from sleep, addressing the Rakshasis, said, "Don't devour the chaste Janaki, be content with your own blood. I had an awful dream this night. Ravana will be soon destroyed with all the Rakshasas. Only Sita can save us then, so let us throw ourselves at her feet. She is cast down with sorrow, but surely she will feel happy if she had such a dream like this. If she be pleased with our greetings, she can certainly save us from imminent disaster."

Thus being pleased with the dream about the victory of her husband, she bashfully replied, "If, Trijata's dream be not false, I shall surely protect you then."

I grew sad and anxious seeing such a miserable plight of Janaki with my own eyes, and thought of the means of carrying out conversation with her. Then, I hit upon a device and began to sing the praise of the royal line of Ikshwaku. As soon as Janaki heard my words she asked me with tearful eyes, "O Vanara ! Who art thou ? Why have you come here ? And how could you contract friendship with Rama ?"

Thereupon, I replied, "O worshipful lady ! Sugriva, the king of the Kapis, is a friend of Rama. I am his servant named Hanuman. Rama has sent me to find out your whereabouts. He has himself given this ring as his token. Now tell me what I can do for you ? Rama and Lakshmana are waiting for you on the southern shore of the sea. If you wish, I may take you there."

Then Janaki said, "It is my desire that the heroic

Rama should himself rescue me by destroying Ravana with his clan."

Then I asked for some happy remembrancer as her token to Rama. At this, she made over to me a jewel taking it off from the ornament of her head. Then, I went round in order to start. At the time of departure, she again said, "O envoy ! Tell Rama everything about me, and do what might induce Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva to come here soon. My lease of life is for two months more, and if Rama does not turn up within this period, I shall surely put an end to my life like a helpless woman."

O Vanaras ! At these piteous words of Janaki I was overwhelmed with anger and resolved to reduce Lanka into ruins. Then I dilated my body and being desirous of a fight I began to break down the Asoka forest. The hideous Rakshasis rose from sleep, beheld me and reported the thing to Ravana. Thereupon, Ravana sent the Kinkarāṣ to fight against me, I destroyed them with the bolt of a door. Then I destroyed a sacred edifice. Then Ravana sent Jamvumali, son of Prahastha. I slew him in fight. Ravana then despatched the sons of his counsellors with the foot-soldiers. I immediately destroyed them all. Ravana then sent prince Akshya and when he got into the sky to display his valour, I caught hold of his legs and dashed him against the ground and he breathed his last. Akshya was the son of Mandodari, and highly skilled in battle. Then Ravana sent his another son named Indrajit, who bound me by the help of a Brahma Astra and took me before Ravana by tying me with a rope. There, I had

talk with Ravana. He asked me why I had gone there. I said it was for Janaki. I gave out my name and the nature of my mission. I said, that friendship had been contracted between Sugriva and Rama, that Rama had made him king after destroying Vali, and he had sent me as an envoy. I asked him to return Janaki without delay, or his army would be destroyed by the Vanara force. None as yet knows the prowess of the Vanaras who are even sought for by the gods.

Thereupon that wicked Ravana angrily looked at me and ordered my death. Thereupon Ravana's brother Vibhishana, interceded on my behalf and pleaded for my life, saying that the killing of an envoy was not sanctioned by the Shastras. Ravana then ordered to set fire to my tail. The Rakshasas then covered my tail with jute¹ and cotton and after setting fire to it began to assault me with their fists hard as logs of dry wood. Fire was burning in my tail. My hands and feet were bound, and the night-prowlers proclaimed my offence in public streets. Thus I was gradually taken near the city gate. At once I contracted my body and freed myself from the bondage.

Then assuming my own form I took up the iron bolt and destroyed the Rakshasas. In the mean time, I burnt down Lanka. After that, I thought since I have reduced the city into ashes, perhaps Janaki too has been destroyed.

O Vanaras! I was overwhelmed with grief at this thought. But in the mean time, I heard the Charanas

1 Please mark that Jute was cultivated in India even in such distant past.

say that though Lanka had been burnt, Janaki was unhurt. I was greatly delighted at this news and from some auspicious signs my belief was confirmed. I thought that though fire was burning in my tail, I was not burnt, and the wind was blowing with the fragrance of flowers, and thinking of the prowess of Rama, Lakshmana and Janaki, I felt greatly encouraged.

Then I again went to Janaki and after greeting her I got upon the Arati for crossing the sea. I was envious to meet you since I did not see you for a long time. All these I have done for Sugriva's sake. You please accomplish what has been left unaccomplished by me.

CHAPTER XLI

JAMVUN'S ADVICE

After narrating everything in details Hanuman again said to the Vanaras :

O Vanaras ! From Janaki's conduct it appeared to me that by Rama's endeavours and with Sugriva's help everything would be crowned with success. Janaki's character is like that of the worshipful Arundhati. By her religious and yogic powers, she can protect the world and can also reduce it to ashes.

Ravana too has great virtue, otherwise he would have been destroyed for touching Janaki's body. What Janaki can do, when angry, by the slight motion of her finger—even fire can not do that. O Vanaras ! You are intelligent, heroic, skilled in arms and desirous of victory. It is quite different with you. Even I can alone destroy Lanka with all the Rakshasas. Though

the Brahma, Raudra, Vayavya and Varuna weapons of Indrajit are quite formidable, yet I can render them futile by my prowess. I did not display my fullest prowess because I had no commission from you for that. The ocean may overflow its shores, the Mandara hill might move from its place, but the enemy's host can never conquer Jamvuvan in battle, and the heroic son of Vali is alone capable of destroying the Rakshasas. The mount Mandara is oppressed by the speed of the Rakshasas. What hero is there amongst the gods and the Asuras that can overcome Mainda or Dwivida in battle? I do not see any one who can oppose the mighty sons of Aswi? Lanka has been burnt, devastated by me alone. I openly declared in the public streets of Lanka, 'May victory crown mighty Rama and Lakshmana and may Sugriva be prosperous being protected by Raghava. And I am the son of the Wind-God and servant of the king of Koshala.' I have announced this everywhere.

I saw vicious Ravana standing at the foot of a Sinsapa tree in the Asoka forest, and the chaste Sita sitting meekly. She was worn out with grief and anxiety, like the moon shorn of her brilliance being enveloped with clouds. She was surrounded by the Rakshasis but being devoted to her husband, she did not care for Ravana, proud of his prowess. Like Paulami to Purandara, all her thoughts are centred on her husband. I saw her wearing a single piece of cloth soiled with dirt; and she wore a single braid of hair. She lay on the ground absorbed in the thoughts of her husband and she looked poor like a lotus at the advent of winter. She has

not the least attachment for Ravana and is resolved to put an end to her life. After creating her confidence, I addressed the gazelle-eyed damsel and related to her the whole story of my mission. She was greatly delighted hearing of the friendship between Rama and Sugriva. She is well-behaved and devoted to her lord and blessed is Ravana that she has not destroyed him yet. Rama will be merely instrumental in bringing about Ravana's destruction. Like the moon on the first day of the lunar fortnight, owing to the separation of her lord she has become exceedingly emaciated in body. Thus lives Sita lean with grief. Do now perform what you think right.'

Hearing all this, Vail's son, Angada, said, "These two sons of Aswi, endowed with great swiftness are exceedingly powerful and they are proud of the boon conferred on them by the Grand-Sire of the creation. Formerly, to honour Aswi, the Grand-Sire of the creation rendered these two incapable of being slain by any. Then once defeating the hosts of the gods, these two heroes, exalted with victory, drank nectar, and these two, if enraged, can destroy Lanka with all its horses, elephants and chariots. What to speak of others, I can destroy the city with all the Rakshasas and mighty Ravana, and there will be nothing to wonder at if I am assisted by mighty heroes like you, well-armed and capable of winning victory. I have heard that Hanuman saw Janaki : why hasn't he brought her here ? You are great heroes ; how will you break this unpleasant news to Rama ?

"In heroism, there is none like you even amongst the gods. Let us now kill Ravana, conquer Lanka and bring back Janaki with delight. Hanuman has destroyed

almost all the Rakshasas, then what also remains excepting the rescue of Janaki? There is no necessity of inflicting hardships upon those Vanaras that have come to Kishkindhya from different quarters. Come, let us first destroy the remaining Rakshasas and then meet Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva."

Thereupon, Jamvuvan cheerfully observed, "Prince! What you have said does not appear to be commendable. You see, Sugriva and the noble Rama have asked us to ascertain the whereabouts of Janaki. They have not given us any direction for her rescue."

"Even, if we can somehow conquer the Rakshasas, that might not be quite agreeable to them. The king of kings, Rama, speaking of his heroic line, has sworn before all about Janaki's rescue; so we must not stand in his way. What you wish to do will spoil everything, and Rama too will not be pleased with it. Let us now go to Rama and Lakshmana and tell them everything."

CHAPTER XLII

RETURN TO KISHKINDHYA

The Vanaras approved of Jamvuvan's proposal and then they descended from the Mahendra mountain and proceeded towards Kishkindhya. They covered the earth and sky in their journey. Everyone looked at Hanuman and everyone was bent upon serving Rama and craving reputation—every one of them was greatly delighted at the news of Janaki. They desired for a fight with the Rakshasas.

Then the Vanaras, following the route through the sky, arrived at Madhuvana, the beautiful garden of

Sugriva. This garden was full of trees and was in beauty like the celestial garden Nandana. Sugriva's maternal uncle, Dadhimukha, the Kapi leader, guarded that garden all along. It was quite inaccessible, but the Vanaras getting there became quite irresistible, and they prayed to Angada for drinking honey. Thereupon, Angada with the consent of Jamvuvan and other elder Vanaras, immediately gave them permission. The Vanaras got upon trees covered with bees, and with great delight began to eat sweet-scented flowers and fruits.

Then, the Vanaras grew wild by the excessive draught of honey.¹ Some began to dance, some to sing, some to laugh, some to roar and some to nod. Some began to walk, some to jump, some of them grew delirious and some began to quarrel with others. Some fell upon the trees and some on the ground in great violence. Some Vanara was indulging in music, while another approached him with an arch smile; some one was weeping incessantly when another approached him shedding tears. Some one was striking another with nails, while the latter was striking the former in return. Thus the Vanara troops grew wild.

Then Dadhimukha, the keeper of the garden, finding the Vanaras thus destroying the fruits, flowers and leaves of the garden angrily asked them to desist, but

1 Madhu means also wine as in the Chandi "Garja Garja Kshanam Mudha Yavat Madhu Pivamyaham." There the Goddess Chandi (the supreme God conceived as the Eternal mother) says to her foe, "Boast on, thou fool, so long as I drink wine." Here the effect of honey has been described like that of excessive drink.—T.

the Vanaras setting his words at naught began to abuse him. Therefore, Dadhimukha became more anxious for the preservation of the garden, and for the maintenance of order. He rebuked the fearless, slapped the weak ones, disputed with some, and tried to pacify some with gentle words. But the Vanaras were completely under the influence of honey and seeing no other alternative he wished to subdue them by force. At that time, the Vanaras had no fear of royal punishment, and they began to drag Dadhimukha with great violence. Some tore him with nails, some bit him with teeth. Some slapped him and some kicked at him. Thus the Vanaras rendered Dadhimukha half-dead.

Then Hanuman encouraging the Vanaras said, "I shall check your adversary : drink in peace."

At this Angada delightfully said, "This hero has come back successful. There is nothing to be said upon what he has said. Even if it be any misdeed, we shall do it. O Vanaras ! Get yourself composed and drink."

Thereupon, the Vanaras repeatedly praised Angada and entered the garden with the impetuosity on entering into a forest. They grew absolutely fearless on account of Hanuman's success and for drinking honey. They, after forcibly binding down the warders of the garden, began to drink honey and eat sweet fruits of the garden. Thereupon, a number of guards arrived there, but the Vanaras began to assault them. Some one took up in his hand honey measuring a *drona*,¹ some began to drink in joy, some threw off the remainder of

1 32 Seers or 60 lbs. make one *Drona*.—T.

his drink, some struck another with the remainder of his drink. Some sat at the bottom of the tree, holding a branch in his hand, some on account of fatigue lay down upon the grassy bed, some fell prostrate on the ground, some began to coo like a bird, some became talkative, some began to laugh, some to weep, some talked in a covert manner while another took it in its pure opposite meaning.

In the meantime, the retinue of Dadhimukha began to run away being assaulted by the Vanaras. The Vanaras took each one of them and threw them up. Then Dadhimukha's men anxiously informed him that the Vanaras being encouraged by Hanuman's words were destroying Madhuvana by their violence, and they threw us down taking us by our legs.

Thereupon, Dadhimukha was greatly enraged and said, "The Vanaras have grown exceedingly proud for their prowess ; let us go and quell them by force."

They then again turned towards Madhuvana, and Dadhimukha rushed forth by uprooting a huge tree. He bit his lips in anger and his followers too took up stones and trees. Then Angada in anger seized him with force and threw him down in great violence on the ground. His bones were smashed and he lay listless and bloodstained. Then after somehow being free from their hands, Dadhimukha advised his followers to go to Sugriva, where the Kapi king was with Rama and Lakshmana, and there they would narrate the misdeeds of Angada. Sugriva would then destroy the Vanaras. "This Madhuvana is the ancestral property of Sugriva, said Dadhimukha, "and if he can know that such mischief

has been done to it; then he will destroy these Vanaras greedy for honey."

Saying this Dadhimukha proceeded towards Sugriva, and taking the route through the sky, he shortly appeared before Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva. His face was dark with sorrow, and with folded palms, he fell upon the feet of Sugriva.

Thereupon, Sugriva, in anxiety said, "Get up, Dadhimukha, why do you throw yourself at my feet. I give you assurance. Why have you been struck with fear? Is not everything well with Madhuvana?" Then Dadhimukha stood up and said, "O king! Vali and yourself are the lords of the Vanaras, but you never allowed the Vanaras to enjoy Madhuvana to their will but Angada and other Vanaras have destroyed that garden. With these guards I repeatedly tried to prevent them, but they were engaged in drinking and frowned at us. They have kicked at some, slapped some and threw up some of them. They have insulted us greatly. You are the king of the Vanaras, Ah! that such things would happen when you are here."

Then Lakshmana enquired, "Why this Kapichief has come, and what is the cause of his grief?"

Thereupon, Sugriva replied, "Your worship, Angada and others have drunk honey in Madhuvana and Dadhimukha has come to inform me of that. It seems that those whom I sent towards the south have come back being successful, otherwise they would not have dared to do all these. Since they have arrived at Madhuvana, it seems there has not been any obstacle to their success. The guards of the forest tried to prevent them, but

they angrily beat the warders. They have not even paid heed to Dadhimukha, the chief of the guards. It is clear that Hanuman has found out Janaki. I don't find any other capable of this. Intelligence, courage, valour and knowledge of the Shastras and success are at his command. You see in whatever work Jamvuvan, Hanuman and Angada are leaders, the result can't be otherwise. Now, these heroes after carrying out the orders have entered into Madhuvana. These guards tried to stop their recklessness, but have come back being insulted. Dadhimukha has come to inform me. O hero ! When the Vanaras have given themselves up to drinking, surely they have gathered information about Janaki. We have got this garden as a gift from the gods. Had they been unsuccessful, they couldn't have been unruly."

Rama and Lakshmana were greatly delighted at this pleasant news. Sugriva then said to Dadhimukha, "O Maternal uncle ! I am exceedingly glad to hear from you that the Vanaras are partaking of fruits and roots of Madhuvana. It is a matter to forbear. Go back to your post and send Hanuman and others soon to me. I am quite eager to know how he had gathered information about Janaki."

Then Dadhimukha bowed to Rama and Lakshmana and went back with the Vanaras delighted. On entering the forest he found the Vanaras, freed from the influence of honey.¹ With folded palms he approached Angada and said, "O prince ! The keepers of this forest unknowingly forbade you to drink. Kindly forgive them.

1 They passed honey through urine.—T.

Thou art prince and the lord of this Madhuvana, drink honey to your fill. At first, I interfered through my foolishness. I have reported everything to Sugriva. He has not been at all angry ; he has rather been pleased and has asked me to send you soon to him."

Then Angada said, O Vanaras ! Dadhimukha joyfully reported everything to Sugriva. It seems Rama and Lakshmana have heard everything. We have committed many misdeeds. Let us now go to Sugriva. I am at your command. I shall do what you will ask me to do. Though I am your prince, still I don't venture to command you."

Thereupon the Vanaras cheerfully returned, "O prince, who can, being himself the master, say like this ? Others proud of wealth try to pose as masters but the case is different with you ; your words are worthy of your modesty. In fact, this modesty indicates your future prosperity and greatness. Now let us go to Sugriva. We assure you, we cannot proceed even a step without your command."

Then the Vanaras covered the sky and went to Sugriva. They proceeded in great speed like stones hurled by machine (tools) and roared like clouds.

At that sight, Sugriva said to Rama, "O friend ! Surely Hanuman, the son of the Wind-God, has got information of Janaki, otherwise none would have ventured to come here after the expiry of the stipulated time. From Angada's delight I can clearly infer that, had he been unsuccessful he wouldn't have come to me. Other Vanaras, even though unsuccessful might have been restive for their mercurial temper; but certainly

prince Angada would have looked sad. Madhuvana is our ancestral garden : certainly Angada would not have entered there, if he were unsuccessful, Rama, be consoled. Hanuman and nobody else, has found out Janaki. Intelligence, success, strength, energy and knowledge of the Shastras are in his possession. O friend ! There is more cause of anxiety from the devastation of Madhuvana. It is clear that the Vanaras have returned successful." The chattering of the Vanaras was then gradually heard. The Vanaras came to see Rama and bowed to him and Sugriva. Then Hanuman came near Rama and with folded palms said, "O hero ! I have found out Janaki ; she is well and is maintaining her chastity."

Rama and Lakshmana were immensely delighted at this nectar-like news. The heroic Lakshmana with great respect looked at Sugriva, and Rama in joy repeatedly looked at Hanuman with affectionate regards.

CHAPTER XLIII

HANUMAN'S MESSAGE

They all repaired to the Prasravana hill. There the Vanaras began to narrate everything about Janaki in full, her confinement in the harem of Ravana, abuses by the Rakshasis, her devotion towards her husband and the time allotted to her by Ravana, etc.

Rama being delighted with Janaki's news, asked to tell him where Janaki was and what her feelings were towards him.

Thereupon, the Vanaras requested Hanuman to narrate everything about Janaki. Then Hanuman bowing down to Janaki in his mind, placed in Rama's

hand the shining jewel as the souvenir of Janaki and with folded palms began, "O Lord ! I crossed a hundred *yojanas* of the sea for Janaki. On its southern shore stand Lanka, the city of the wicked Ravana. I have found there Janaki ; she is imprisoned within the seraglio of Ravana. The Rakshasis are ever abusing her. She is kept under guard. She is suffering intensely from the pangs of your separation. She wears a single braid of hair on her back. She is sad and ever absorbed in your thoughts. The earth is her bed. She looks pale like an antelope at the advent of a hunter. She has resolved to give up her life on account of her hatred for Ravana. I created her confidence, reciting the glories of the Ikshwaku race. Then being engaged in conversation with her, I spoke about my mission. She has been glad learning of your friendship with Sugriva. She is ever devoted to you, and she does everything for you. I have seen that Janaki is devoted to pennace.

"O Rama ! She has narrated everything about how she was tyrannised by a crow on the Chitrakuta hill. She has also requested me to tell you everything of what I have witnessed with my own eyes in Lanka. I have brought this jewel of her head with great care. She has asked me to offer it in the presence of Sugriva. She has repeatedly asked to remember the mark you used to put on her face with red arsenic. She has further said that she would keep her life for two months more. Thus has said the worshipful Janaki. Now, devise means for crossing the sea.

Then placing Janaki's jewel on his heart Rama began to weep and looking repeatedly with tearful eyes at that

jewel addressing Sugriva, the Kapichief, he said, "My friend! My heart melts at the sight of this jewel, as milk trickles down from the udders of a cow at the sight of her calf. This gem was presented to Sita by Janaka, the king of Videha at the time of her wedding. This jewel was obtained from the ocean and was presented to him by Sakra being pleased with sacrifice. The sight of this jewel repeatedly reminds me of the royal saint, Janaka. Darling Janaki used to wear it on her head and it seems I have got her back actually. O gentle one, tell me again what Janaki has said. As sprinkling of water restores senses to the unconscious, so her words have revived me with life. O Lakshmana! I see this jewel without Janaki! What can be sadder than this? If anyhow she can pass two months, she will live long. O hero! I cannot bear the pangs of separation even for a moment. Now take me to that region where you met Janaki. Having got information of her I cannot wait for a moment. Janaki is very timid by nature, and I know not how she passes her days amongst the dreadful Rakshasas. As the bright autumnal moon becomes dark with clouds, so her face has now become devoid of lustre. As medicine is to the sick, so her words will be sufficient for keeping this life. Tell me what that sweet-tongued damsel has said. Tell me how she has managed to live, suffering misery after misery."

Then Hanuman said, "O Rama! Janaki has mentioned the incident of the crow on the Chitrakuta hill as a remembrancer. Once she was asleep; in the meantime a crow suddenly appeared and tore her breast. At that time you were lying on Janaki's lap, so the crow, fear-

less, again tore her breast. Your body became drenched with blood and she in agony roused you from sleep. Seeing her distress with your own eyes, you panted like a serpent and asked, "Tell me who has torn your breast with nails? Who wanted to dally with an angry penta-hooded sanke?" Saying this, you cast your eyes round and saw a crow with bloody claws before Janaki. That was Indra's son, in speed like the wind. He lived in a terrestrial cave. As soon as you saw the crow, your eyes rolled in anger and being resolved to kill it, you took up a weed from your grassy seat and aimed at it. It flamed like the doomsday fire and you then discharged it towards the crow. The burning Kusa-weed followed the bird. It ranged through the three worlds, but did not get any refuge anywhere. Thereupon, it again came back to you and begged for shelter. Seeing him lying low on the ground, you took pity on him and saved him though he was worthy of being slain. But your Brahma weapon was irresistible and it could never fail, for this you only injured his right eye. Then the crow repaired to his own place bowing down to Dasaratha and to you.

"O hero! Janaki has further said, 'I know not why you are forgiving the Rakshasas. There is none who can match you amongst the Devas, Danavas and the Gandharvas? Now if you have the slightest regard for me, then soon slay the wicked Ravana with sharp arrows. Why is not heroic Lakshmana rescuing me at the direction of his brother? The valour of these two princes is incapable of being repressed even by the gods. Then why are they neglecting me? When they

are indifferent about a thing which is quite within their powers, it seems I am somehow at fault.' O Rama ! Hearing these piteous words of Janaki, I said, 'O worshipful lady ! I can verily swear unto you that Rama is on your account indifferent about everything, and the heroic Lakshmana seeing this change in him is passing his days in great sorrow. With great trouble I have gathered your whereabouts. Don't despair now. 'To tell you the truth, your sorrows will soon be over. Rama and Lakshmana in their eagerness to see you, will reduce Lanka to ashes. The heroic Rama after destroying the villainous Ravana with his family, will take you back to Ayodhya. O worshipful lady ! Give me some present that can be recognised.'

"Then Janaki once looked round and conferred this excellent ornament of head from her cloth. I took that jewel in folded palms for you, and was ready to start. At this, Janaki became extremely agitated and with tearful eyes broke forth again, 'O Messenger ! You are exceedingly fortunate, since you can see the lotus-eyed Rama and Lakshmana.' Then I replied, 'O worshipful lady ! Soon get upon my back ; I shall take you to Rama and Lakshmana even this day.' Thereupon, Janaki said, 'O messenger, I shall not, of my own accord, touch your back. It will be against righteousness. Formerly I had to touch the body of the Rakshasa but that was due to circumstances. How could I help it ? Soon return to those two princes. Enquire after their welfare and that of friend Sugriva. Tell the heroic Rama to rescue me soon from these miseries. What shall I add further ? I wish you God-speed.'

"O worshipful lord ! Janaki, out of her love for you and on account of her friendliness towards me, said again, "O Messenger ! May heroic Rama soon rescue me by destroying the wicked Ravana. You see, at your sight the sorrows of this unfortunate soul has abated for the time being. Now if you wish, you may remain in hiding in some secret place in Lanka, then after removing your fatigue start tomorrow. I shall eagerly wait for your return with wistful eyes, but it is doubtful whether I shall live so long. I have already been suffering from one misery after another. After this your absence will overwhelm me more. O hero ! I know not how the Vanaras, Bhallukas, the Kapichief Sugriva and those two princes will ever cross the impassable ocean ? Except you, Garuda and the wind I do not find any body else capable of crossing the ocean. You are intelligent ; now tell me what means you devise for that. I admit that you alone can achieve all these, but it will be worthy of him if he comes with his army and destroys the enemy. It will be only proper for him if he invades the city of Lanka with Vanara troops and rescue me thereby. Now act in such a manner that the great hero may be eager to show his valour." Then I replied, 'O worshipful lady ! Sugriva, the lord of the Kapis, has determined to rescue you, and he will soon arrive with the Vanara hosts to destroy the Rakshasas. The Vanaras are his obedient servants. They are mighty and irresistible. They are quick like the flight of thought and never any fatigue is observed in them in accomplishing arduous deeds. O lady, there are Vanaras superior to me and my equals under the Kāpi King, but there is

none inferior to me. Not to speak of those great heroes, even myself, humble and weak as I am, have arrived here. The best are never sent on any mission, the inferior ones are employed in such work. So don't be dejected with sorrow. The Kapi heroes will cross the ocean in one bound, and Rama and Lakshmana will arrive on my back like the sun and the moon. You will soon witness that lion-like hero with brother Lakshmana at the gate of Lanka. You will soon see the Vanaras formidable as lions and tigers, and soon hear their heroic roars on the top of that hill. O worshipful lady ! You will soon witness Rama will return with you to Ayodhya and will be invested with the crown.' O Rama ! Janaki, though heavily cast down with sorrow for your absence has been greatly comforted by and consoled by these assurances of mine."

THE END OF THE SUNDARA KANDAM

Volume III

Yuddha Kandam

CHAPTER I

RAMA'S DESPAIR

Having heard everything in detail about Janaki from Hanuman, the noble Rama said with a contented mind, "Hanuman has easily accomplished what a man cannot even dare conceive. I do not see any one else, besides the feathered King Garuda and the Wind and this great hero, who is capable of crossing the ocean.

"The city of Lanka is protected by Ravana and is inaccessible even to the Devas and the Danavas. Who can enter the city by his own prowess and come back alive? He who is not mighty like Hanuman can never dare do so. He has proved himself a worthy servant of the monkey king, Sugriva, by achieving this arduous deed. He is certainly an excellent fellow who after performing the duty appointed by his master, out of his own accord, puts his hand in other matters. He is a mediocre person who does not perform anything else, besides the task allotted to him by his master. He is a bad fellow, rather the worst, who in spite of his ability does not even perform the given work. This hero has performed the work entrusted by his master and has become victorious and has thus satisfied Sugriva. In fact, he has saved me, Lakshmana, nay, even the line of Raghu by bringing information about Janaki. But I am sorry that I can not reward him properly for this act. Now only a friendly embrace is all that I can give and with delight I give him that."

Saying this, Rama, with his hairs standing on end, embraced Hanuman with joy and after thinking for a while began to speak again before Sugriva, "Now the whereabouts of Janaki have been gathered, but my mind sinks thinking about the crossing of the sea. Vast impassable sea! I know not how the Vanaras will cross the ocean! O Hanuman! you have brought news of Janaki, now tell me the means of crossing the sea." Saying this, Rama began to think with a sorrow-laden heart.

Then Sugriva, King of the Kapis, seeing Rama extremely nervous, began to speak, "O hero! Why hast thou been cast down with sorrow like an ordinary man? Cast off your sorrows as an ungrateful person abandons friendship. Now, information of the worshipful Janaki has been received and the location of the enemy's city, Lanka, has been gathered. Then why do you lament thus? You are intelligent and learned, now cast off your weakness. Surely we shall cross the sea, enter Lanka and destroy the enemy. Danger thickens round him who becomes depressed with sorrow, and he suffers greatly. These Vanara-leaders are exceedingly mighty and powerful, and they are ready even to enter into flames for your good. At their joy, it seems to me that we shall rescue Janaki by destroying the enemy. O hero! now think of the means. Just devise how a bridge can be constructed across the sea so that we can easily reach the city of Lanka. Unless a causeway is made, even the gods and the Asuras¹ dare not

1 In the original Vedic verse 'Asura' means those

attack Lanka. It is necessary to build a bridge up to Lanka. If the Vanaras can cross the sea, we shall surely be victorious. To speak the truth, this is my conviction strengthened by the joy of the Vanaras. Now cast off this injurious despair which frustrates all human endeavours. Just display your valour. Valour is one's ornament. You are versed in all the *shastras* and most intelligent. Now make preparations for the destruction of the enemy with the help of warrior-friends like myself. When you stand up for a fight bow in hand, I find none in the three worlds who can face you then. Everything depends upon these Vanaras, and if you depend on them you won't have any occasion for despair. Now, be fired up with rage. A gentle Kshatriya becomes worthless and devoid of energy. Moreover, there are very few who are not afraid of a man of violent temper. However, now devise the means of crossing the ocean with us. If the means are ascertained, certainly we shall be victorious. The mighty Vanaras will destroy your enemy by hurling shafts and stones. I find various kinds of auspicious signs and from the feeling of satisfaction in my mind, I think that fortune of victory will soon be within your grasp."

CHAPTER II

HANUMAN'S NARRATION

Rama having agreed to Sugriva's reasonable words, spoke to Hanuman, "O hero! I

who have "life and vigour."

shall anyhow cross the sea. Now I ask you, how many forts there are in Lanka. What is the number of troops? Is the city-gate impregnable? How is it guarded? Tell me what you have witnessed with your own eyes. I want to learn these, as if from my own experience." Thereupon Hanuman replied, "Listen, I shall narrate to you how Lanka is impregnable, how it is guarded, how loyal the Rakshasas are, the nature of their army, Ravana's pomp and power and the dreadful aspect of the sea.

"Lanka abounds in horses, elephants and chariots. It has four big, massive gates in four directions. Its gates are strong and provided with bolts. In those gates, huge stones, arrows and other weapons have been kept in readiness with which the hostile army (as soon as it will come in front of it) will be crushed. There are hundreds of sharp iron 'Sataghnis,' fitted with their engines.¹ A golden wall worked with jewels encircles the city and is quite insurmountable. After it, there is an immense moat. It is exceedingly deep and full of crocodiles and fish. In front of every gate, there is a spacious bridge. That bridge is guarded by a machine and the hostile army is thrown into the ditch by that machine. Of them there is one which is the strongest and biggest of all and is adorned with a number of golden pillars and diases. I found king Ravana ready for war, and very cool-headed and cautious. He himself always inspects the army. His city rests on hills

¹ Apparently some mechanical contrivances were set up for the defence of the city.

which are not to be climbed without any support. It is quite formidable like a fortress built by the gods. In it, there are water forts, hill-fortresses and four kinds of artificial forts. The city is built on the shore of the sea. No boat can sail in that vast chartless sea as directions cannot be ascertained. Hundreds of thousands of Rakshasas guard the eastern gate of Lanka. Millions of Rakshasas guard the southern gate, ten millions the western gate and hundreds of millions the northern one. They are well-armed and formidable, and they carry swords, shields and lances. With them there are four divisions of army. Quite a number of cavalry they and fighters in chariots guard the inner passage. They are born of heroic families and are servants of Ravana. I have broken Lanka's bridge, pulled down its rampart and sacked the city. Now, let us somehow cross the sea. The Vanaras will surely conquer Lanka. Angada, Dwivida, Mainda, Jamvuvan, Panas, Nala and general Nila alone will be able to achieve the object. They will ruin Lanka, the city of the Rakshasas. If it is desirable to cross the sea with the Vanara host, then our preparations for war should immediately be made."

CHAPTER III THE MARCH

Rama, hearing everything from beginning to end from Hanuman, said, "It is not impossible for you to crush Lanka. But I have something to say. The present moment is very

auspicious for victory. It is not proper to lose it ; so let us now set out for fight. The wicked Ravana has carried away Janaki. He won't be able to save his life anywhere. As a dying patient feels relieved by taking good medicine, so Janaki will surely be comforted by the news of our setting out for war and will keep her life. Today, reigns the star Uttara-phalguni and tomorrow the star Hasta will join the moon. Sugriva ! now let us start. Auspicious signs are to be noticed everywhere. The lids of my eye are throbbing. I shall surely be victorious and shall rescue Janaki after slaying Ravana."

At this, both Lakshmana and Sugriva were greatly pleased. Then Rama spoke again, saying, "Let the heroic Nila proceed in advance of the army, with hundreds of Vanaras for examining the route. O Nila ! lead your army through places where there is plenty of fruits and roots, where drinking water is clear and cool and where sufficient quantity of honey is obtained. The enemy may poison both food and drink, so be always on your guard for the safety of the army. Let the Vanaras reconnoitre the army of the enemy lying in ambush, by entering a deep forest. Let them stay here who are weak. You see the present task is to be achieved with courage and valour, so it is desirable to assemble a heroic army. Let the Vanara troops advance like waves of an agitated sea. Let Gaya, Gavaya, and Gavaksha go ahead like two proud

1 "And nectar" occurs in the original.

bulls. Let Rishabha protect the right flank and formidable Gandhamadana, like an infuriated elephant, protect the left flank. I shall ride on Hanuman's shoulders in the midst of the army and Lakshmana on that of Angada. We shall proceed encouraging the troops like Indra and Kuvera mounted on elephants. Heroic Jamvuvan, Sushena and Vegodarshi will guard the rear of the army."

Then Generalissimo Sugriva ordered the Vanara army to march. The Vanaras soon came out of their forests and caves. Rama proceeded towards the south with the army. He was surrounded by the heroic Vanaras and the mighty Vanara army followed him, and Sugriva took charge of them. Every one was glad and began to set up terrific yells. Some of them went ahead to remove all obstacles from the path. Some drank sweet-scented honey, some fed upon fruits and roots and some carried flowery trees in their hands. "We shall destroy the Rakshasas," the Vanaras began to roar in the presence of Rama. In order to avoid all obstructions from the passage, the heroic Rishabha, Nila and Kumada went ahead with the Vanaras. Mighty Satabali guarded the army with thousand millions of Vanaras, Kesaris, Panasas, Gaja and Arka guarded the flanks with millions of Vanaras. Sushena and Jamvuvan protected the rear with thousands of Bhallukas. General Nila in order to prevent various sorts of troubles went along with the army. Valimukha, Prajangha, Jambha and Babhasa and others spurred the army for a speedy march. The vast Vanara host

advanced like an agitated ocean and overran villages and cities in their march. Rama riding on Hanuman's shoulders and Lakshmana on those of Angada, appeared like the sun and the moon under eclipse ! All, however, felt happy.

Lakshmana, seeing auspicious marks all over spoke to Rama, "O Arya ! you will soon recover Sita by destroying Ravana and return to prosperous Ayodhya. I have been seeing different signs on earth and in the sky.¹ The wind is sweet-scented and is gently blowing in favour of the army.² Birds and beasts are uttering sweet cries. All the quarters appear bright, the sun is clear and the planet Venus is bright, the polar star is shining in full. There the Ursa Major is revolving round them in brilliant light. Look, there is the Trishanku star ; our forefather is shining along with the priest Vasishta. Vishakha is the star of our line, look how it shines undimmed, and the star Mula fed by the influence of Nairit is being continually touched and scorched by the staff-like comet,—it is the star of the Rakshasas. In short, these things indicate the ruin of the Rakshasas. When one's doom draws nigh, the star of his line becomes oppressed by other planets. Now water is clear and sweet, and the trees are laden with various sorts of fruits and flowers. The

1 The description appears to be anomalous. Both the phenomena of the day and the night are described at the same point of time.

2 of Meghaduta : "A favourable wind slowly and gently urges thee on."

vast Vanara host appears like the celestial army at the time of the destruction of the Tarakasura. O Arya ! just be cheerful at these sights."

At last the dust raised by the feet (and hands) of the Vanaras covered all quarters and the sun. Like clouds moving under the sky, they passed hills and forests darkening everything in their march, towards the south, halting from time to time in places or valleys with clear water, fruit-laden forests, and upon woody hills. Then the Vanaras indulged in various pranks by uprooting trees, tearing down creepers, and by climbing down rocks. Thus the Vanara host marched day and night. Their object was to rescue Janaki, so they did not want to take any rest. At a distance, the Sabya and the Malaya hills were seen. The Vanaras climbed them in joy. They disturbed the forest by their speed, and mineral dusts being gradually raised by the wind from the Tahya hill covered the army. Various kinds of flowers bloomed on the hill, Ketaki, Sinbhuvara, Vasavti, Kunda, Chiravillova, Madhuka, Vanjula, Vakula, Ranjaka, Tilaka, Naga, Cheeta, Patalika, Kovidara, Mucha, Arjuna, Sinshapa, Kutaja, Hintala, Tinieha, Champaka, Kadamva, Nila, Asoka, Sarala, Ankula and Padmaka. The Vanaras were greatly delighted at their sight. The hill had beautiful lakes, which were visited by ducks, swans and the Chakravaks were full of the sweet fragrance of lotuses, lilies and other kinds of aquatic flowers. Deer and swine were roaming about hither and thither

Some of the places were infested with lions, tigers and bears.

The Vanaras bathed in ponds and lakes and became sportive. They partook to their heart's content, fruits, roots and honey. Like fields with ripe paddy the hill grew brownish yellow with the Vanaras. After this the lotus-eyed Rama ascended the Mahendra hill. On getting upon its summit, Rama saw the vast ocean stretching far and wide, everagitated by billows. Getting down from there, Rama entered the woods lining the shore, along with Lakshmana and Sugriva. The high waves of the sea were continually beating against the rocky shore. Rama arriving at the shore, said, "Sugriva ! we have reached the sea. My mind is filled up with strange thoughts. The other shore of this dreadful sea cannot be seen. It is impossible to cross it without a contrivance." Sugriva halted at the command of Rama and Lakshmana and the vast Vanara host in view of their colour, appeared like a second sea ! The heavy sound of their march drowned the deep roar of the sea. The army was divided into three divisions, and before them lay the far-stretched sea ever tossed by the wind. It extended unthwarted on all sides, no limit or bound was to be seen. It was full of fierce animals. It laughed with foam and danced with waves. The moon being up, the sea heaved in joy and the reflected moon danced in its bosom. The ocean was dreadful to look at like the nether region. Whales and Timingilas (devourers of whales) were swimming about hither and thither with great speed. Here

and there were huge sub-marine rocks.² They were luminous, as if sparks of fire had fallen on the sea ! The waters of the ocean were ever rising and falling. The sea was like the sky and the sky was like the sea ; there was hardly any difference between the two. The sky had stars, and the sea had clusters of pearls ; the sea had waters and the sky had clouds, the sky and the sea met with one another. Deep roaring of the waves due to their clash sounded like trumpets. The sea appeared to be angry, as if trying to rise and its deep roar thundered in the wind. The Vanaras in wonder stared at the sea with winkless eyes.

CHAPTER IV

IN SORROW

General Nila pitched his camp in due order on the sea-shore, and Mainda and Dwivida were patrolling round it for the encampment of the soldiers. In the meantime, Rama said to Lakshmana, "O my darling ! grief abates with time but since dear Janaki has been removed from my presence, my sorrows have been daily increasing. I am not so very sorry because Janaki is far away or that she has been stolen away by the Rakshasas ! I fear that her lease of life is limited. O wind ! blow there where Janaki is and breathe over me after touching her limbs. It

1 We get in Greek classics expressions like "Wine-coloured," "Olive-coloured" sea.

2 Near Rameswaram Setubandha there are sub-marine rocks.

will be a source of consolation to me to feel the touch of her body in the wind and perceive her look in the moon. Alas ! how bitterly Janaki cried uttering, "O Lord, O Lord !" when she was abducted. That thought burns me now. Her love burns me day and night, fed by the fuel of her absence. I shall enter into the waters of the sea ; then love won't be able to burn me any more. This is enough for me that I am living along with Janaki on this planet—the earth. With this consolation alone I am keeping up my very life. As a piece of dry land becomes wet in contact with distant stream, so the news that Janaki is alive supports my life. Alas ! when shall I see the lotus-eyed Janaki like royal fortune after victory in war ? When shall I kiss those red lips after raising the countenance a little ? When will she deeply embrace me with her throbbing breasts round like twin palms ? Alas ! she is passing her days like a husbandless woman whose husband I am. Janaki, the daughter of king Janaka, daughter-in-law of Dasaratha and my spouse, how is she passing her days amongst the Rakshasas ? As the moon rises in the autumnal sky by peering through the banks of clouds, so she will rise in glory after the dispersion of the Rakshasas by my arms. She is by nature shy and merry but she has grown extremely lean in distress, and by fasting. When shall I banish my sorrows by piercing Ravana's heart with my arrows ? When will that chaste lady shed tears of joy by embracing my neck ? And when shall I cast off my sorrows like a piece of dirty cloth ? "

By that time, the sun went down. Rama remained absorbed in Janaki's thoughts. He was somehow consoled by Lakshmana's words and then said his evening prayers.

CHAPTER V

RAVANA'S ANXIETY

Now, Ravana was extremely morose seeing the mighty deeds of Hanuman. He said with his head bent down in shame, "You see, it is not at all easy to enter this city of Lanka, but only a Vanara entered it, got sight of Janaki, broke down sacred edifices, destroyed heroic Rakshasas and devastated Lanka. Now what is to be done? Just decide what may be worthy and honourable for me. Heroes say, that victory is obtained by counsel. Now let us hold consultation over it. There are three kinds of persons in society : Good,¹ bad and indifferent. Without noticing their characteristics it is not possible to classify them. One should consult with friends and persons engaged in the same act and if necessary even other persons might be consulted. He who acts in consultation with persons, who has foresight² is the best of all. Next to him, is he who acts alone, waits for chance and alone plans war and peace. And he who does not weigh pros and cons about any thing, who neglects chance and who is indifferent about his duty is the worst of all. As there

1 Best and not bad and worst, in the original.

2 Divine Vision.

are three kinds of persons, so there are three kinds of counsels. When all agree to a counsel that is the best according to the science of polity. That is tolerable or second in merit when there is at first a difference or divergence of opinion, each one holding his own and each debates in a different way, and that counsel in which there might be some agreement is the worst. You are intelligent, now do what you think best. You see Rama is advancing towards Lanka with a large Vanara host in order to attack us. It is not impossible for him to cross the sea either by physical prowess or by a miracle. He can bridge over the sea or make it dry. My ministers! such is the state of affairs. Now advice what will be the best from all points of view."

CHAPTER VI

VIBHISHANA'S COUNSEL

Then Nikumbha, Rasabha, Surya-satru, Suptaghna, Vajarkopa, Mohaparshwa, Mahodara, Agniketu, Durdharsha, Rashmikutu, Indrajit, Prahasta, Virupaksha, Vajradantra, Dhuraksha, Durmukha and many other heroes sprang forward with their arms. Glowing with enthusiasm and brandishing their weapons they said in a body to Ravana, "We shall surely destroy Rama and Lakshmana this day and shall cut in pieces him who has burnt down Lanka."

Then Vibhishana strove to pacify them and

requesting them to resume their seats said to Ravana with folded palms, "O king! war is the last resort for doing a thing which cannot be achieved by the ordinary policy of equality, magnanimity or that of discussion. One may attack for special reasons him who is infirm or besieged. But Rama is not a blunderer, he is wise, gentle and warlike. Why do you intend to attack him? Who could divine or know that Hanuman would cross this dreadful sea? O Rakshasas! it is not wise to despise an enemy's strength without knowing its true nature. Tell me what evil Rama has done to the Rakshasa chief. Why did he abduct his wife from Janasthana? Khara first created the disturbance by overstepping his limits, and that was why Rama killed Khara for it is one's duty in every respect to protect one's own life. Perhaps for the death of Khara, the Rakshasa king has stolen Janaki, but this act is highly reprehensible and this will bring about our ruin. I tell you again and again that it is best to return Janaki. What benefit will accrue to us from unnecessary quarrel with another? Rama is heroic and noble; it is not wise to incur his hostility. O king! I do implore you earnestly to restore Janaki to him. Return his Janaki before he reduces this prosperous Lanka to ruins, or before it is besieged by the Vanara host. I am your brother. This is why I am requesting you repeatedly. Give back Janaki before Rama discharges his irresistible arrows, bright as the

1 This is how Antenor in the Iliad insisted for returning Helen to the Greeks.

glowing sun, for your sure death. O king! banish anger from thy mind ; it destroys one's happiness and virtue. Keep up your honour, reputation and uprightness. Be thou pleased and allow us to live with our wives and children. Then the Rakshasa Lord, Ravana, on hearing these words of Vibhishana, entered his palace by leaving everybody there.

After this, the pious Vibhishana arrived at Ravana's palace next day early in the morning. It was massively built, high as a cliff and its spacious halls were symmetrically designed. It was guarded on all sides by a band of faithful men. It was peopled by intelligent and devoted followers, and its breeze was ever agitated by the heavy breath of infuriated elephants. Conchs and trumpets were being blown here and there, damsels were roaming about thither. Its spacious gate was made of gold and a number of people thronged in front of it in the public street. They were engaged in various sorts of idle discussions. The palace seemed to be the residence of the gods, Gandharvas or the Bhujangas.¹ Vibhishana in brilliant apparel entered the palace as the sun enters a bank of clouds. At the time of entrance, he heard the bards versed in the Vedas sing the glory of Ravana. He saw the priests, versed in Mantras, standing in a file with curd, clarified butter, grains and flowers in their hands.

After entering the hall, Vibhishana approached

¹ Mythical creatures superior to mortals but literally means snakes.

the resplendent throne of Ravana and bowed to him and after showing his honours to the king, he sat upon a golden seat as beckoned by Ravana. Then Vibhishana addressed the king in these well-meaning words, "O king! various kinds of evil portents have commenced since Janaki's arrival. Fire does not increase in volume though fed with sacrificial libations offered with *mantras*, before it is lighted it is clouded with smoke and afterwards it continues to emit smoke and sparks; reptiles are seen in places of worship and in sacrificial rooms and kitchens and in places where sacred fire is kept. Ants are found in articles to be offered in sacrifice, the cows have grown milkless and the elephants are without their temporal sweat. Horses are hungry and are neighing feebly. Asses, mules and camels are found to shed tears, and they cannot be cured even by treatment. Ravens¹ in flocks sit upon the roof of the palace and cry themselves hoarse. Vultures stare even sitting on the roof of the palace! Jackals howl inauspiciously morning and evening coming near. Thundering cries of ravenous beasts are often heard at the city-gate. O king! in order to prevent all these evils return Janaki to Rama. If I have said anything against you through my ignorance, please do not mind it. All the Rakshasas and the Rakshasis will have

1 Please mark that there was veterinary science even in such distant past.

2 "The Raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan under my battlements."

—Macbeth.

to pay the penalty for his abduction of Sita. Though none of your councillors have advised you thus, I must tell you what I have myself seen and heard. I request you to listen to my friendly advice." On hearing this reasonable speech of Vibhishana, the Rakshasa king Ravana, glowed with rage and angrily said, "I do not see anything anywhere to be afraid of. It is not my desire to return Janaki to Rama. To speak the truth, even if he appears on the field of battle with the gods on his side he would not be able to stand my might." With these words Ravana curtly dismissed Vibhishana.

CHAPTER VII

THE COUNCIL OF WAR

Ravana was deeply fond of Janaki and was ever absorbed in her thoughts. He became daily afflicted by the consequences of his sin and by the remorse of his losing respect amongst his own people. He began to hold councils of war with his ministers and followers, though war was not desirable at all.

Ravana clad in gorgeous apparel got upon his car worked with pearls and gems and covered with golden net, drawn by well-trained horses and proceeded towards the royal assembly-hall and the Rakshasa warriors, armed with various weapons went before him. Elephants, chariots and horses followed him in files. Trumpets and conchs were blown aloud. Each gate of the city was thronged with troops. 1A

golden umbrella, like the moon, stood over his head, and on his two sides white *chowris* with filaments of gold were being gently waved. Hundreds of Rakshasas lined the streets, standing with folded palms. They greeted him with their salutes, sang his praise and prayed for his victory.

At a little distance stood the royal hall, built by Viswakarma, the architect of heaven. Its floor was paved with silver and gold, and in the middle stood a crystal dias¹ worked with gold. Four hundred Pisachas guarded that hall. Ravana arrived there with resounding air by the deep rumbling noise of his car. An excellent jewelled seat awaited him. That was covered with soft deer-skin and was furnished with pillows. Ravana after alighting from his car got upon that seat and addressing his emissaries said, "Some council about war is necessary. Just call the Rakshasas here."

On receiving the royal mandate, they all instantly dispersed in various directions and summoned the Rakshasas from their beds and gardens. Then some of the Rakshasas came on elephants, some on horses, some in cars, and some on foot. They bowed to Ravana, and he received them with due honour. They took their seats according to their respective ranks. There were councillors and others. In the meantime Vibhishana got down from a spacious car of gold, entered the hall, and greeted Ravana. Suka and Prabartha offered seats to the assem-

1 In some readings it is a coverlet and in some these descriptions do not occur at all.

bled persons. Every one had excellent apparel on, and was adorned with the gold and jewels. The scent of *aguru* sandal and of garland filled the air. Every one was silent and repeatedly looked at Ravana's face. They were war-like and carried arms. Thereupon Ravana appeared like Indra amongst the Vasus. Then Ravana after casting his look round the assembly said to General Prahastha, "My fourfold forces are well-disciplined and versed in the art of war, now order them to guard the city with vigilance." Then Prahastha went out and stationing troops in every gate of the city within and without, hied back and said, "I have carried out your orders, now tell me what is your desire."

Then Ravana said, "You yourselves know what is good or bad, what is desirable or not, what will conduce to happiness in times of danger, and the action you decide on after due deliberation can never fail. To speak the truth it is due to your assistance that we are enjoying the kingdom with safety. The great hero Kumbhakarna sleeps for six months, and it is for this I did not then break his sleep. But he is now awake, as you know. I have brought hither Rama's beloved wife from Janasthana. That damsel is graceful, but she refuses to accept me. In the whole world there is none so beautiful like her. Her waist is slim, hips are heavy and her countenance is like the autumnal moon. She is glowing like an image of gold and quite startling like the magic illusion of Maya. The soles of her feet are reddish and soft and her nails are of pink hue.

She is radiant like sacrificial fire and glittering like the glowing sun. Her eyes are expanded, and her nose pointed. I have been simply bewitched. Love overcoming my feelings of anger is consuming my heart day and night. It is even eating into my gracefulness. Janaki has asked me to wait for a year for Rama, and I have agreed to her proposal. I feel quite exhausted for love, just like a tired horse. I know not how Rama will cross the dreadful sea with his Vanara host. Rather it is difficult to infer anything, since a single Vanara could commit so much mischief. Though we need not fear any man, yet decide according to your own intelligence what course of action is best. Formerly, I achieved victory in war against the Gods and the Asuras with your help. Now help me in this matter. I have received information that Rama and Lakshmana having heard about Janaki from their emissary's lips have advanced towards the sea with Sugriva and other Vanaras. Now, think of the means by which we can slay them and avoid restoration of Janaki. I never fear that a man will ever cross the sea with Vanara troops and conquer me. Not to speak of a man, none in the world will even dare do this. Surely victory is on my side."

At this, Kumbhakarana angrily said, "O king, the time for decision was already past the moment you abducted Janaki being bewitched with her beauty. There was time for our decision before that. Wise is that monarch who acts thoughtfully and never repents any deed done in indecent haste. In fact, it was

highly wrong of you to carry one's wife by force. If you but informed us before being engaged in that act, certainly some remedial means could have been found out. If any wrong act is done without any previous consultation, then it becomes a source of trouble like impure clarified butter offered in a sacrifice. The monarch who has no sense of what is to be done before and what is to be done after is devoid of any sense of polity. To speak the truth, for one who is so fickle, enemies always remain on the alert for his weak moments, though he might be exceedingly powerful. O king! you have acted without thinking about the consequence. It is rather your good fortune that you have not been yet destroyed by Rama. I shall, however, help you in battle and fight against Indra, Agni, Surya, Vayu, Kuvera and Varuna, or anybody else. I am huge as a mountain and if I rush with a bolt even Indra will be stricken with fear. Be comforted, I shall kill Rama before he discharges a second arrow after the first. I shall confer victory on you and shall devour the Vanaras. Banish your fear; eat, drink and be merry and do what is good. After Rama's death at my hands, surely Janaki will be yours."

The Rakshasas were foolish and short-sighted; they submitted to Ravana with folded palms, "We have enough of arms and troops, so we do not see any cause of remorse. Thou hast conquered the Urugas of Bhogavati and captured Pushpaka-Ratha by defeating Kuvera, the Yaksha king, who resides in the Kailasa mountain

and takes pride in his friendship with the divine Lord Mahadeva. The Danava king, Maya, in order to live in friendship with you has conferred on you his daughter Mandodari. He is proud and mighty, but thou hast humbled his pride in battle. You have subdued the Naga king, Vasuki, Takshaka, Sankha and Jati in the nether region. The Danavas known as the Kaikeyas who are haughty for the boon they obtained from the gods and are invincible were defeated by you after a year's struggle and you learnt magic from them. The sons of Varuna are exceedingly powerful, and they came to fight with their divisions of fourfold forces, but were defeated by you. The might of Yama is like that of the ocean, his mace is like fierce crocodiles and sharks, his noose like violent waves, his servants like snakes, fever is like fierceness of the sea. You boldly plunged into that sea and prevented death. Everybody, every Rakshasa, is pleased with your gallant warfare. There are innumerable formidable Kshatriyas, and Rama cannot be in any way superior to them, and you conquered them all with your might. Now, why should you bother seriously at all? Be comforted. Indrajit alone will conquer the Vanara host. He has obtained a rare boon from Rudra, the God of gods, by performing an excellent sacrifice. Once the heavenly hosts were chastised by this hero. He took Indra as a prisoner of war, who was at last released at the request of Brahma, the Grand Sire of creation. O king! now commission Indrajit; he will be able to achieve

the object. The present trouble has been caused by a common human being. There is no special cause of anxiety. Surely, Rama will meet with death at your hand.

Then general Prahastha dark like a cloud, said to Ravana with folded palms, "O king, what to speak of man. I myself can subdue the Suras, Asuras and the Gandharvas. When we were indulging in pleasure and luxury from a sense of security, then Hanuman deceived us by entering the city. Now that villain will not escape punishment, so long as my life is in me. Just order me. I shall denude the world of all the Vanaras. I shall protect you from the fear of the Vanaras. Rest assured, nothing untoward will happen to you for the crime of abducting Sita."

Then the heroic Durmukha gently said, "O king, we can never brook any defeat from the Vanaras. I shall save you from the Vanaras by destroying them all alone whether they enter the sea, or fly in the sky, or hide themselves in the nether regions. There is no escape from my hands."

Thereafter the war-like Vajradanstra angrily broke forth taking up the *parigha* weapon stained with blood and fat, "O king, what accrues by killing poor Hanuman while Rama and Lakshmana and Sugriva remain untouched. To speak the truth, I shall alone dispense with the Vanara host by this lance and slay those three villains. My liege, I have another thing to submit. Victory attends him who is energetic

and skilful. I am now speaking about that device. You see the Rakshasas are adept in black art and mighty. Let them assume human forms and appear before Rama and tell him distinctly, "O prince ! Bharata has sent us for your help." On hearing this Rama will at once come to Lanka with his army. Then we shall attack him on half-way and destroy his army with our weapons and shall shower on them arms and stones by stationing ourselves in the sky."

Thereupon Nikumbha, son of Kumbhakarna observed with angry look, "Ye Rakshasas, live in peace with our lord. I shall alone destroy the Vanaras along with Rama and Lakshmana."

Then Vajradanstra said, "Remove your lethargy, be up and doing about the achievement of your object. I shall alone devour all the Vanaras. Go and drink to your heart's content. I shall destroy the Vanaras this very day."

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEBATE

Then the heroic Prahastha after a moment's thought said, "O king ! he must be a foolish person who does not drink what he finds within his reach after entering into a dense forest full of ferocious animals. Enjoy yourself with Janaki at ease, setting your feet on Rama's head.

Behave like a cock and attack her again and again. What fear is there after the gratification of your desire? If there arises any cause of anxiety at all you will be quite competent to ward that off. The great heroes, Kumbhakarna and Indrajit, can subdue even Indra. Equity, magnanimity, dissensions and punishment are the four means of accomplishing one's object. Of these we adopt chastisement as our means. To be brief, our enemies will surely be vanquished by our prowess."

Then Ravana praised Prahashta and said, "O hero! just hear an incident of old. Once upon a time, I saw a nymph named Pejrkera going to Brahma. She was bright like a burning flame. At my sight, she hid herself in fear. But I at once caught hold of her and made her naked. After that she went to Brahma like a crumpled lotus. Hearing of my conduct from her lips, Brahma uttered a curse, "Thou wicked soul! henceforth if you apply force against any woman, your head will be sundered into pieces." Since then I am living in fear of that curse. That is why I do not employ force against Janaki. My might is like that of the ocean, and motion is like that of the wind. Rama is quite ignorant of my prowess, hence he is proceeding towards Lanka. Who dares to provoke a sleeping lion awaiting like Death in its den? Rama is advancing because he has not yet seen my arrows like dreadful unsubdued snakes. As the sun robs the stars of their light, so I shall rob him of his prowess. Even the thousand-

eyed Indra and Varuna cannot subdue me. This city once belonged to Kuvera ; I have occupied it by my own valour."

Then the noble Vibhishana said to Ravana, "O chief of the Rakshasas ! Janaki is like a dreadful snake ; her body is like that of a snake, her thought is poison, her smile is like fangs and the five fingers of her palm is like five hoods ! Why have you tied this fatal snake round your neck ? Before Lanka is besieged by the formidable Vanaras, restore Janaki to Rama. Before the heads of the Rakshasas are lopped off by the sharp arrows of Rama, return Janaki to him. Surely, Kumbhakarna, Indrajit, Mahodara, Nikumbha, Kumbha and Alikaya would not be able to stand before Rama. You would not be able to save yourself if you take shelter with Surya, Vayu, Yama or Indra, or hide yourself in heaven or in the nether region."

At this, Prahastha remarked, "O hero ! in battle we are not afraid of even the Yakshas and Gandharvas. Why should we be afraid of Rama, a human being ?"

Then the pious Vibhishana said, "Prahastha ! what you, Mahodara, Kumbhakarna and the king have said about Rama will never be fulfilled, like salvation in the case of a sinner. There is none amongst us who can slay Rama. Is it possible to cross the ocean in a raft ? Rama is virtuous and highly accomplished, he is born of the Ikshvaku line, even the gods are outwitted by him. Prahastha ! you are boasting simply because Rama's arrows have not yet

pierced your heart. Rama's shafts are absolutely fatal and like thunderbolt. How will you be able to stand the might of Rama ? To speak the truth, you are enemies of Ravana in the guise of friends. You are advising him thus simply for the destruction of the Rakshasa race. Ravana is in the coils of a formidable serpent with a thousand hoods. Just save him from that fatal snare. He is about to be drowned in the sea of Rama's prowess ; just drag him up by his hair. I have expressed my candid opinion without any fear and I ask you to return Janaki to Rama. This will be good for the Rakshasas as well as for the king. He is a just councillor who advises his master after properly ascertaining the prowess of the enemy and of their own."

Then Indrajit, hearing this speech of Vibhishana, looking like the preceptor of the gods, said, "O uncle ! why do you speak like a panic-stricken fellow ? Even he who is not born of the Rakshasa race could not speak like this, could not have acted like this. Heroic valour, might and energy of our family are not to be found only in you. What to speak of the Rakshasas as a whole, any ordinary person can slay those two princes. Then why do you frighten us thus ? Indra is the king of the gods and I brought him down as a captive on earth, and the gods in fear dispersed in disorder at that sight. I plucked the tusks of the heavenly elephant Airavata. I am the terror of the Danavas and have humbled the pride of the gods. Shall I then be now afraid of these two men ?"

Then the heroic Vibhishana said to the spirited Indrajit, "My dear son ! you are yet a boy. Your intellect has not yet been ripe, and you have little knowledge about what is to be done or not. You are talking like this for your own destruction, as being the son of Ravana, you are not preventing him from such a dangerous act. You are his son only in name, rather an enemy in the guise of a friend. You have been possessed by an evil genius. You are young and rash. Both you and he who has summoned you to this council will be destroyed by Rama. Rama's arrows are quite fatal and can reduce the world into ashes. Who will be able to stand them? O Rakshasa chief! go and pacify Rama by returning Janaki adorned with jewels. Let us live peacefully in Lanka."

Thereupon the evil-minded Ravana said these harsh words to Vibhishana in anger, "It is better to live with an open enemy, or even with an angry serpent, than with a secret enemy in the guise of a friend. I am not ignorant of the (treacherous) nature of kinsmen—one is delighted at the ruin of another. They hate him most who is the best amongst them, who is virtuous and mighty. Even if he be the pillar of the state, and if he be a hero, they wait to pounce upon him in an opportune moment. The hearts of these treacherous fellows are full of deceit and are really dreadful. I shall now narrate what some elephants are said to have remarked at the sight of a man with a noose amongst the lotuses." The elephant said, "We are not so much afraid of fire weapons or noose as of our selfish kin. It

is they who tell others the ways of taking us captives. Therefore kinsmen are to be feared most of all. As milk is to be found in a cow, fickleness in a woman, and meditation in a Brahmana, so the cause of fear lies in a kinsman. Vibhishana! perhaps you cannot bear that I am lord of immense riches, and the vanquisher of my enemies over the three worlds. Friendship with a villainous person is as unstable as a drop of water on the leaf of a lotus. It rains or thunders like an autumnal cloud, but can never make beings quite wet. As an elephant soils his body after bath, by blowing dust with his trunk, so a villainous person uproots his former love or affection. As a snake hastily leaves the flower by sucking its honey, so friendship with a villainous person quickly terminates, and it is fruitless, just as a bee is disappointed ever of a drop of honey, however much it gnaws at the Kasha flower. Shame unto you! had it been anybody else, I would have at once cut off his head for talking like this."

Then the truthful Vibhishana, hearing such harsh expressions of his elder brother, stood up with a mace in his hand along with four Rakshasas, and angrily said, "O king! you are my elder brother, and so respectable like father, but you have no religious insight. You are greatly mistaken; do what you like, but I shall not brook all these harsh expressions. I told you what was good for you. Only one whose end is nigh could be offended with my words. It is easy to speak what one is delighted to hear, but he is rare who dares speak an unpleasant thing but

meant for good, as well as he who can listen to them. How could I be indifferent about your distinction like that of a brilliant plant? And could I indifferently look with my own eyes, you being slain by the arrows of Rama. Even he who is a great hero and skilful in the use of arms crumbles like a bridge of sand at the approach of his doom. You are my superior. Please forgive me for what I have said for your own good and be mindful about your safety. O king! I leave you now, may you be happy without me. O king, I asked you to forbear for your own welfare. I opposed you for your good, but that was quite unpalatable to you. To him whose end draws near, the word of a true friend becomes unpleasant and disagreeable."

CHAPTER IX

THE CONSULTATION

After saying hard things to Ravana, the noble Vibhishana instantly appeared before Rama and Lakshmana. He was shining like lightning. The Vanaras espied him above the sky. Vibhishana had four followers with him; they were clad in excellent apparel and equipped with armour and weapons. Seeing those five Rakshasas from a distance, Sugriva became anxious, and pointing them to Hanuman and others said, "Look there! an armed Rakshasa with four others is coming to be killed." As soon as the Vanaras heard those words, they uprooted

stones and trees and said, "Just order us, we shall kill those rascals without delay. They will surely give up their ghosts."

Then Vibhishana arrived at the northern shore of the sea. He was calm and fearless, and appearing before Sugriva, said in a deep voice, "There is a wicked Rakshasa named Ravana. He is the chief of the Rakshasas and I am his youngest brother named Vibhishana. He has carried off Janaki from Janasthana by killing Jatayu. Now that poor lady is confined within his palace and is always guarded by hundreds of Rakshasis on all sides. I repeatedly requested Ravana to return Janaki, but his doom being near he did not listen to well-meaning words as a dying man refuses to take medicine. He abused me and insulted me. Now having abandoned my wife and children, I have sought your shelter. Rama is the refuge of all ; go and tell him that Vibhishana has come."

Then Sugriva hastily appeared before Rama and Lakshmana and angrily said, "Some one from the enemies has unguardedly entered in the midst of our army. He will kill the Vanaras in on opportune moment as Uluka destroyed the Vayasas. We ought to be careful about our consultations and actions about ourselves and the enemy. The Rakshasas are warlike and can assume different forms at will. They do injury to others by remaining concealed and by adopting crooked policy ; so they should not be believed. This newcomer is certainly a spy of Ravana, if he can once get his admission here,

he will witness discussion amongst us, or when we shall be off our guard from our sense of confidence in him, this shrewd fellow will cause our destruction. We should collect friends and not enemies. The newcomer's name is Vibhishana : he is Ravana's youngest brother. They are our enemies, how can we believe him ? That fellow, at the instruction of Ravana, along with four persons, has sought your protection. It is proper to kill him now. When you will bask in his confidence, he will destroy you ; so it is desirable to kill him now by striking him violently." General Sugriva became silent after expressing his opinion thus in anger.

Thereupon the noble Rama said to Hanuman and other Vanaras, "You have heard the reasonable speech of Sugriva which he has just now made about Vibhishana. He who wants abiding prosperity should give advice even to accomplished friends. Now I want to know your opinion in this matter." Then the well-wishing Vanaras said to Rama, "O hero ! There is nothing unknown to you in the three worlds. You are now speaking thus simply to honour us and out of your regard for friendship. You are wise and considerate and you have great confidence in your friends. Now let the wise counsellors express their individual opinions before you."

Thereupon Angada remarked, "O hero ! Vibhishana has come from the enemy's camp ; therefore there is much to be believed. Treacherous people conduct themselves deftly and

they strike whenever any opportunity presents itself to them. Such a thing is dreadful. It is proper to act after considering the pros and cons of everything. One should be sought for for his virtues and abandoned for his vices. You should forsake Vibhishana, if you find any great fault in him or take him in if he possesses some great virtue."

The heroic Sharabha said, "Immediately engage spies to watch Vibhishana. First let him be thoroughly tested by keen spies, and then accept him."

Thereafter the wise Jamvuvan after quoting the Shastras said, "Ravana is our mortal enemy and Vibhishana is his brother, so there is much to fear."

Then Mainda after deliberation said, "Rama! Vibhishana is Ravana's brother, first ask him everything in gentle words. First test him and see whether he is wicked or not, then do what you intelligently decide to be done."

Then Hanuman versed in the Shastras, the chief of the counsellors said, "Rama! You are wise, intelligent and a speaker. Even Vrihaspati, the preceptor of the gods is no match for you in eloquence. Now I am telling you something, not being inspired by any ambition for eloquence, or vanity, but in course of duty. I cannot approve of what has been advised by your ministers for testing Vibhishana. In the first place no such thing is possible. It is not possible to verify or test anybody without engaging him in something, but such sudden commission

is not proper. As regards setting spies on him, it is useless to employ such spies when a thing is quite palpable. I have something to say about time and place which has been just now observed. Just listen to me. Vibhishana has arrived in right time and place. Ravana is vicious, whereas you are virtuous ; he is wicked, you are faultless and heroic. That Vibhishana after examining these things has come to this place is quite becoming of him. I have something to add after Mainda's suggestion for testing Vibhishana by spies. You see whenever anything is asked, an intelligent person grows anxious. Some real truth may thus be gathered, but if the newcomer be a friend or if he seeks happiness, he will feel annoyed by such fruitless scrutiny. It is absolutely an unfounded assertion to say that an enemy's intention can be gathered by merely questioning him. You yourself talk to him and gather his real intentions from his voice. To speak the truth, when Vibhishana introduced himself, no trace of wickedness could be detected. Even a satisfied look was seen then. How could I suspect him ? He who is treacherous can not appear to be quite hale and cheerful. Vibhishana's words were not in any way diplomatic. Then how could I suspect him ? It is not all easy to conceal one's real motives ; they perforce reveal themselves. This action of the heroic Vibhishana is not in any way unnatural. Vibhishana after considering your military preparations, Ravana's vanity of power, death of Vali, and the coronation of Sugriva has wisely come hither for the

throne. If we consider all these things, it is desirable to take him in. Rama! you are wise. I have said this, noticing the sincerity of Vibhishana. Now do what you think best."

Then Rama versed in the Shastras cheerfully observed, "O Vanaras! you are my well-wishers. I shall tell you something about Vibhishana. You see Vibhishana has come as a friend. Even if some fault may be detected in him, still I cannot forsake him now. It is ignoble for the good not to give shelter even to a bad man if he seeks protection."

Thereupon Sugriva said with reasons, "It is not at all proper to take him in, whether he is good or bad, who forsakes his brother in times of danger. For what guarantee is there that he will not desert us in peril?"

Then Rama after casting his look at the Vanaras with a smile said to Lakshmana, "What my friend Sugriva has observed cannot be spoken by anybody unless he is well-versed in the Shastras and devoted to the aged. But I know there are two kinds of reasonings, one popular and the other subtle, to account for the separation between brothers amongst the kings. I shall mention that now. There are two kinds of enemies, one is a kinsman and the other one is a neighbour. Those two commit mischief whenever they get any opportunity. Those who wish well are sought for by the people, but sometimes they are discarded by the kings. Hearing this Vibhishana has come here. What you have pointed out about the faults of taking

in one's enemy has its other side too. If the brothers live in amity, there may exist love between them or there will ensue quarrel and fight. Now Vibhishana has quarrelled with his brother, hence, he has come here. He is Ravana's brother, so he should be killed with Ravana."

Rama further said, "Vibhishana may or may not be silly in mind but he would be able to do me the least mischief. I can destroy all the Rakshasas at ease. I have heard that once a hunter previously killed the pigeon's mate, but seeing him taking shelter under that tree, the pigeon received him hospitably and gratified him with his own flesh. If a bird's attitude towards its enemy be such, then how can a man like me behave otherwise? Let me tell you what has been sung by truthful Randu, the son of Maharshi Kanwa. He says that if an enemy, ever seeks protection with folded palms, you should give him shelter. It is the duty of the virtuous to protect his enemy, be he cowardly or haughty, if he takes shelter being oppressed by another. He commits a great sin who does not either through fear or intentionally give shelter according to his power to him who seeks his protection, and he incurs ill-fame. If the person who has taken refuge is destroyed in the presence of him, then all the sins of the refugee will be heaped upon the head of his protector. Vanaras! all these evils occur when one forsakes him who asks for protection, and these stand in the way of salvation. Henceforth I shall act like Randu and shall give him

protection whoever will declare that he is mine. O Sugriva, bring soon Ravana or Vibhishana, whoever he may be, I shall give shelter to him."

Still Sugriva said, "Rama ! You are virtuous, honest and there is nothing to wonder that you will speak like this. Hanuman has examined him carefully and I am sure he is truthful and pure. The virtuous Vibhishana is wise, let him come here and be friendly with us occupying the same position as we do."

CHAPTER X

MEETING WITH VIBHISHANA

Vibhishana thus being exceedingly delighted by the assurances of Rama cast his looks down towards the earth and alighted from the sky with his four faithful followers. He bowed down to Rama and his followers also did so in their turn.

Vibhishana then said to Rama, "Rama ! I am the youngest brother of Ravana ; he has insulted me greatly. Thou art the shelter of all, so I have sought thy protection. I have renounced all the wealth and pleasures of Lanka, my life and happiness are at your disposal."

Thereupon Rama looked at Vibhishana with eager eyes and said, "Vibhishana ! just tell me about the strength of the Rakshasas."

Vibhishana said, "O prince, the Rakshasa

king Ravana has been rendered indestructible by the boon of Brahma. His second brother is Kumbhakarna who is even a worthy match of Indra on the field of battle. I am the youngest, Prahastha is the commander-in-chief of Ravana. He defeated Manibhadra on the Kailasa mountain. The heroic Indrajit is his son. He fights by putting on impenetrable armour, and gloves of cow-hide for the protection of his fingers, and while engaged in fighting he would make himself quite invisible. This hero by pleasing the god of fire can render himself invisible and fight terribly against the enemy's host. Mahodara, Mahaparswer and Akampana are the commanders of Ravana. Their might is like their master's. Ravana's crack army will be about tens of billions. They live in Lanka and feed upon flesh and blood. Ravana fought against other kings with this army, and none can stand his assault ; even the gods flee away in fear."

Having heard all this Rama weighed everything carefully in his mind and said, "Vibhishana! I quite appreciate what you have said about Ravana's prowess. But I tell you truly that I shall destroy Ravana with his sons and generals and shall invest the crown on you. Even if Ravana enters the nether region and takes refuge under Brahma, he will not escape with his life. I swear by my brothers I shall never return to Ayodhya without destroying him with his brood."

Then the virtuous Vibhishana, bowing to Rama, said, "I shall help you as much as it lies in

me to destroy the Rakshasas and to conquer Lanka, and I shall be henceforward the enemy of Ravana."

Rama then embracing Vibhishana in great delight said to Lakshmana, "Go and fetch water from the sea. I have been greatly pleased with Vibhishana ; crown him king."

Then the gentle Lakshmana at the command of his elder brother brought water from the sea and performed the ceremony investiture to the throne of Lanka. The Vanaras, seeing Rama thus behaving nobly with Vibhishana, chattered in joy and praised Rama. Then Sugriva and Hanuman said to Vibhishana, "O Rakshasa chief, just devise the means by which we shall be able to cross the sea." Then the pious Vibhishana said, "Let Rama seek the help of the ocean. The sons of Sagara opened this vast ocean. This Rama is a kinsman of the sea and the ocean will never be indifferent to Rama." Then Sugriva coming near Rama said, "Rama ! it is Vibhishana's desire that you should approach the Ocean for permission to cross the sea." Rama was greatly delighted at this good advice and with a cheerful face asked Sugriva and the active Lakshmana to arrange everything for his respectful reception and said, "This advice of Vibhishana appears to me to be very happy and proper. Sugriva is learned and you are also wise, do what you think best after consultation."

Thereupon Sugriva and Lakshmana in respectful words observed, "O worshipful lord ! what pious Vibhishana has advised is

certainly favourable to us. Even gods like Indra and others cannot reach Lanka without constructing a causeway over it. So it is necessary to work according to Vibhishana's instructions. It is improper to delay any further. Let us go and pray to the Ocean. Rama then sat on a *kusa* seat on the shore like a tongue of fire on the sacrificial altar.

CHAPTER XI

SUKA'S MESSAGE

Ravana had a spy named Sardula. Being commanded by his master he appeared on the sea-shore to reconnoitre the army commanded by Sugriva on the other side of the sea. He returned in great haste to Ravana and said, O King! the Vanara and the Bhalluka hosts are vast like the sea. They are advancing towards Lanka. King Dasaratha's sons Rama and Lakshmana are exceedingly beautiful. They have arrived at the sea-shore for the rescue of Janaki. The Vanara army has infested all quarters. It is necessary to ascertain their number. Send emissaries to achieve your work by policy."

Thereupon, Ravana anxiously said to Suka, "Suka! go at once to Sugriva and tell him in sweet and gentle words, 'Sugriva! you are born of a royal family. You are the son of the Rikshaking and are heroic. You have nothing to gain or lose by helping Rama. Even if there is some question of gain, I too am like your brother. Though I have carried off Rama's wife, what is that to you? Go back to Kishkin-

dhya. Not to speak of the Vanaras and human beings, even the gods and the Gandharvas cannot come to the city of Lanka.' ”

Then Suka assuming the form of a bird soon flew to the sky, and after traversing a great distance approached Sugriva, and without getting down he delivered Ravana's message to Sugriva from above. The Vanaras seeing him thus talking from the sky, by a mighty spring, caught hold of him to clip his wings and to kill him by fist-blows and brought him down on earth. Thus being oppressed by the Vanaras, Suka piteously cried out, “O Rama ! it is not proper to kill an envoy ; forbid the Vanaras. One who without delivering his master's message gives out his own views deserves to be killed.”

The virtuous Rama out of pity towards Suka asked the Vanaras to desist, and the Vanaras let him off. Suka again got into the sky and said, “O King of the Kapis ! Ravana is cruel and treacherous. Tell me what I should say to him.”

The heroic Sugriva then replied in a bold tone, “Deliver this message to Ravana on behalf of me, ‘O Rakshasa king, you are not my friend, nor dear to me. I have no reason to be kind to you, nor are you my helper in any way. You are Rama's enemy and Rama will destroy you with all your kinsmen. O Villain ; we shall destroy Lanka with all the Rakshasas. There is no escape from Rama's hand whether you hide yourself in heaven or in hell or even if you

take shelter at the feet of the Divine Lord Byomakesa. I find none amongst the Rakshasas, Pisachas, Gandharvas or amongst the gods that can save you. The only proof of your valour is that you killed the old bird Jatayu, infirm with age. If you boast of your prowess, then why did you carry off Janaki in the absence of Rama and Lakshmana who are irresistible. Have you not yet understood that he will destroy you without fail?" Then prince Angada said to Rama, "Perhaps, he is not an emissary, but a spy of Ravana. He has come here just to ascertain your strength. Whatever might be the result, capture him so that he may not go back to Lanka. This is my view."

Thereupon the Vanaras at once bound down Suka. Suka began to cry helplessly and the Vanaras began to beat him hard. Suka, being molested by the Vanaras, cried, "Alas, Rama! the Vanaras have plucked my feathers and are piercing my eyes. I was born at night and all my sins will visit upon your head."

Then Rama stopping the Vanaras said, "He is an envoy; so let him go."

1 The belief was that if a person lost his life for no fault of his but at the connivance, or in the presence of another whose protection the former had sought all the iniquities of the former will visit upon the latter for this sin.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EPISODE OF THE SEA

Then Rama lay down on the Kusa grass on the sea-shore, facing the east with folded palms. At that time his arm served for his pillow, formerly that arm was decorated with white and red sandal and various kinds of golden ornaments, it was repeatedly touched by the hands of his mothers adorned with pearls and gems, and, at night Janaki's beautiful head rested on it; that hand was like the serpent king Takshaka lying on the stream of the Ganges. It was the protection of the sea-girt earth, it contributed to the sorrows of the enemies and to the delight of his friends. It was long like a bolt, reached up to the knees and this hand gave away hundreds of cattle in charity. Rama having made that right arm his pillow lay silently on the shore of the ocean, thinking that either he would achieve his object or dry up the sea.

Three nights passed. Rama prayed to the Ocean, but still the god of the ocean did not appear. Then his anger was up, and the ends of his eyes became red. Then addressing Lakshmana close by, Rama remarked, "You see, the god of the ocean has not appeared to me yet, how proud he is. Haughty people consider gentleness, forgiveness and sweet speech in good people as weakness, and are simply despised by them as signs of worthlessness. He who is haughty, wicked or unrighteous, and who advertises his accomplishments, and he who

punishes another without judging his guilt or innocence, is respected by the people! Lakshmana! fame, victory and reputation cannot be won by gentleness. Now, it is necessary to display my prowess to the Ocean. This day by my arrows, the fishes will lose their lives and their dead bodies will choke the waters of the sea. I shall this day cut in pieces the trunks of the water-elephants and dry up the sea with its conchs and oysters. You see, the Ocean thinks me powerless, because I am forgiving. It is certainly improper to forgive such a person, my boy! Go and fetch my bow and snake-like arrows. I shall even now dry up the Ocean and the Vanara host will march over its dried bed. It is the abode of the Danavas, I shall surely agitate it."

Saying this, the heroic Rama took up his bow and arrow. His eyes grew dilated with rage, and he looked dreadful like the doomsday fire; and after bending his bow he discharged his shaft with a thundering boom, that seemed to shake the earth. As soon as the shaft was discharged, it burned with its own fire and in violent speed entered the sea. It heaved the ocean violently, thundering sounds were heard and the aquatic animals including sea-serpents were thrown up with great force, and the waves with sharks, crocodiles heaved up like the Mandara hill and burst into whirling eddies. A terrible confusion fell on all.

In the meantime, Lakshmana holding Rama's bow, seeking to stop him said, "O worshipful

lord ! it is not proper for you to smite the Ocean thus. A man like you is never swayed by passion. Now devise some means for the attainment of your goal." At that time the heavenly saints appearing in the sky began to dissuade Rama in loud voice.

Then Rama addressing the Ocean said, "I shall dry up the sea with the nether region. Its waters will be gone and dust will rise from its bed. The Vanaras will cross it on foot. It is due to its vanity that it does not pay heed to me."

With these words, Rama affixed an arrow to his bow and consecrated it with Brahma mantras. As soon as that arrow was drawn on the bow-string, heaven and earth began to shake, the planets began to revolve in wrong directions, the sky was covered with darkness, thunder began to peal again and again, and a heavy gale broke down trees. All the living beings shrieked in fear and invisible creatures filled the quarters with their cries. Many lay down trembling in fear. The sea overflowed its shores, but Rama was not at all moved by these.

In the meantime, the lord of the ocean appeared as the sun rises on the Udaya hill. His colour was of emerald green, he was adorned with ornaments, he wore a necklace of gems, and a wreath of flowers over his head, and his eyes were expanded like the petals of a lotus. Like the Himalayas, he was decked with the gems that grew in him. Waves broke into

eddies round him and he was surrounded by a cloud-like mist. Along with him there were the rivers Ganges and the Indus and many fire-breathing snakes. Approaching Rama, he said with folded palms, after greeting him duly, "Rama! the earth, air, water, sky and light, being created by God, follow the course of nature as appointed by the Creator. Restlessness and fathomless depth are my two features. I cannot restrain my current on account of fear, or from love of gain. I shall bear whatever means you adopt for crossing the sea and the aquatic animals will not molest the Vanaras in any manner so long they cross the sea, and for the smooth crossing of all I shall remain as calm as a piece of land."

Rama said, "O Ocean! My Brahma weapon is irrevocable, now tell me where I shall discharge it."

Then the Ocean looking at the weapon said, "Rama! there is a place called Drumakulya just to my north; fierce-looking robbers like the Abhiras live there; they are vicious; they drink my water and I can't bear their vicious touch. Discharge your Brahma weapon upon them."

Thereupon Rama discharged his dreadful shaft and the place where it fell became a desert. Mother earth was greatly smitten by that arrow, and water from the nether region began to swell up continually through that fissure caused by the Brahma weapon. That water-spring thenceforth came to be known as the

Vranakupa, and water even gushed through it like that of the sea. At that time, a terrible sound like the rending of the earth was heard. That sound and the arrow dried up the water. Then Rama, powerful as a god, blessed that tract saying, "Henceforth this tract will be healthy and salubrious for the animals; it will abound in fruits and roots. Flowers and milky and sweet-scented things and various kinds of medicines will be found here in abundance." In fact, owing to the blessing of Rama, the desert tract became an excellent place.

Then the Ocean, versed in all the Shastras, said, "O noble one! blessed Nala is the son of Viswakarma and by the grace of his father, he has attained proficiency in the art of construction. You too love him dearly. Now let him build a bridge over me and I shall bear it ungrudgingly. Like the celestial architect, Viswakarma, he too is skilful in construction." Saying this, the god of ocean disappeared from there.

There heroic Nala standing up submitted to Rama, "O hero! the god of ocean has stated the truth. I have received a boon from my father and for that I can build a causeway over this vast sea. Now it appears to me that punishment (force) is best suited for the achievement of one's object. It is not proper to be charitable or forgiving towards the ungrateful. You see the god of ocean disappeared in the depth from fear. Formerly, on the Mandara hill, my father Viswakarma said to my mother, "O lady! your

son, in all respects, will be like me, I am Viswakarma's own begotten son, and I am like him. Not being questioned before, I did not speak anything till now. I shall build a bridge over the sea ; let the Vanaras help me in this work even from this day."

Then the heroic Rama engaged the Vanaras in Nala's service. The Vanaras, huge like mountains, cheerfully entered the forest and brought down big trees on the shore. Gradually the shore became filled with salas, asvakarnas, dhavas, bamboos, kutajas, arjunas, palms, tilakas, Tinahas, Vilwas, Saptaparnas, Kamikaras, chutas, asokas and other trees. The Vanaras uprooted all the trees and brought them like the upraised flag-staffs of Indra. Dadimba creepers, cocoanut trees, vakulas, nimbas, kariras and bibhitakas were brought in large number. The big Vanaras plucked huge rocks and carried them with the help of machines. These trees and stones being hurled in great force into the sea, the waters heaved and fell alternately. In fact, the sea became greatly agitated by the hurling of stones and trees into it. The heroic Nala with the help of the Vanaras commenced building a hundred yojana bridge over the sea.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CAUSEWAY

Then with the help of the Vanaras the heroic Nala began to build the causeway hundred yojanas in length. Some of the Vanaras, to

be sure that the bridge is not bent, took up plumb-line and the requisite. Some carried huge slabs of stones, some of which were dark green like clouds and some black as rocks. They began to build with trees and stones, and all were animated with great enthusiasm and energy. Everywhere the Vanaras were seen carrying huge blocks of stones and trees, and there was a terrific din on account of continually throwing stones and trees into the sea. Everyone was eager to display his skill and energy. Thus, gradually, on the first day fourteen yojanas were built; on the second day twenty yojanas, on the third day twenty-one yojanas, on the fourth day twenty-four yojanas, on the fifth day twenty-three yojanas. Thus the heroic Nala with great skill, like his father Viswakarma, with the help of the Vanaras, built a beautiful bridge to the other shore of the sea. Then the long bridge shone like the milky way in the sky.

Then the denizens of heaven appeared in the sky to witness that wonderful bridge. The bridge, built by Nala was ten yojanas wide and hundred yojanas long. Everyone looked at it with eyes wide with amazement.

The Vanaras jumped in joy. That wonderful bridge was well-built, broad, and wonderful to look at and it appeared like the boundary line of the vast ocean.

Then Vibhishana, with mace in his hand and with his four counsellors guarded the southern end of the bridge so that the enemies might not cross the bridge. Then Sugriva said

to Rama, "Get upon Hanuman's shoulders and let Lakshmana get on the shoulders of Angada. The sea is far-stretched and these two Vanaras, rangers of the sky, will carry you to the other shore."

At the head of the army first proceeded Rama, Lakshmana and the heroic Sugriva. A vast host followed protecting the flanks and the rear.

Some of the Vanaras jumped into the sea, some went over the bridge and some flew above like birds. A deafening noise was produced by their march, which became mingled with the thundering roar of the sea.

Thus they gradually crossed the sea. The Kapi chief, Sugriva, settled his army in that tract abounding in fruits and roots. Then the gods and the demons, seeing this wonderful feat of Rama, approached him and reverentially said, "O king! may victory attend on thee, may you rule for ever this earth bound by the seas."

Thus the gods and saints began to praise Rama.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EVIL OMENS

Then Rama on seeing evil omens on all sides embraced the heroic Lakshmana and said, "Oh, my dear one! let us now take rest by encamping in this tract, a land abounding in fruits and drinking water. Evil omens presaging the destruction of good many people

are to be found everywhere. Dust-storm is blowing. There is an incessant earthquake and the peaks of the hills are fast trembling! The dark-grey clouds with thundering noise are raining blood. The evening looks dreadful and red like the red sandal-paste. Eruption is going on in the burning sun and ravenous birds and animals are piteously crying, looking at the sun. At night the moon is not visible much—its rays are hot and its disc appears to be dark and red, as if the moon has arisen for the destruction of the people. The sun is intensely glaring, its circumference seems to be red and a fierce blue spot is seen in the sun. The stars are enveloped in dust and vapour, as if the doomsday has come. You see, crows, vultures and hawks are flying about hither and thither. The jackals are howling presaging evil everywhere, Lakshmana! The earth will now be covered with the arms of the Vanaras and Rakshasas and their dead bodies, drenched with their blood. Let us today force our way with the Vanara hosts into Lanka—the city of Ravana.”

Saying this, Rama first proceeded towards Lanka holding a bow in his hand, Vibhishana, Sugriva and others following him with heroic roars. The Vanaras grew determined for the destruction of the Rakshasas. At that time Rama was highly pleased with the patience and work of the Vanaras.

CHAPTER XV

THE PREPARATION FOR FIGHT

Then Rama drew up his army in battle array. As the autumnal night looks beautiful with the full moon, so that vast host was graced by the presence of Rama. The earth shook and became highly oppressed by the vast Vanara hosts—stretching far and wide like the sea. At that time, a great noise prevailed in Lanka, and the sounds of trumpets and *mridangas* were continually heard. The Vanaras were greatly delighted at those sounds and uttered heroic yells in joy. The Rakshasas heard that thundering roar like the rumbling of distant clouds.

Then Rama, on seeing Lanka decked with flags began to think in a sorrowful mind, "Alas! the gazelle-eyed Janaki is confined there like the star Rohini overshadowed by planets." Then heaving a deep sigh, Rama addressing Lakshmana said, "My boy! just see this city of Lanka kissing the sky,¹ as if the heavenly architect Viswakarma from his imagination has built this city upon the high hill. Seven-storied building white as the fleecy clouds stand everywhere in the city. Beautiful parks and gardens decorate the city. The birds are chirping in those beautiful gardens and the leaves of the trees with bees clinging to them are gently waving in the breeze, and the woods are echoed with the sweet notes of cuckoos."

1 It reminds us of the sky-scrapers of New York

After this, Rama dividing his army according to the directions of the Shastras, said, "The heroic Angada and Nila would remain in the middle with their armies. The heroic Rishabha will protect the right flank of the army, and Gandhamadana its left flank. And I shall with Lakshmana remain on the front. Let Jamvuvan, Sushena, and Vegodarshi protect the centre, and the Kapi chief Sugriva will protect the rear, as the sun protects the western side of the earth."

Thus, Rama established order amongst the Vanara army and it appeared like a vast cloud. The Vanaras in order to crumble Lanka into pieces began to fetch huge blocks of stones and trees.

Thereafter Rama addressing Sugriva said, "My friend ! Our army has been divided according to the directions of the Shastras. Now let loose the Rakshasa Suka." Thereupon Sugriva released Suka at the command of Rama. As soon as he was released, Suka instantly ran to Ravana in fear.

Then, Ravana casting his look at him smilingly observed, "Have your two wings been tied, as if they have been torn off ? Did you fall in the hands of the Vanaras ?"

Then Suka replied, trembling with fear, "O king ! on arriving at the northern shore of the sea, I submitted to Sugriva in soft words all that you had said to me. But at my sight, the Vanaras were greatly provoked and they wanted to clip my wings and slay me with

fist-blows. My lord! the Vanaras are, by nature, very haughty and irritable. Not to speak of vanquishing them, it is even difficult to talk to them. That great hero, who has despatched Viradha, Kavandha and Khara to the realm of death — that Rama along with Sugriva has come in the course of his search for Janaki. He has crossed the sea by building a bridge over it and he does not care a fig for the Rakshasas. He is just waiting like a hero. Now the earth is covered with cloud-like Vanara and Bhalluka hosts. Peace between the Rakshasas and the Vanaras is as impossible as between the Suras and the Asuras. Those troops will soon reach the city-wall. Either soon restore Sita or be ready for war."

Thereupon the Rakshasa king, with eyes red with anger, as if scorching everything with the fire of his wrath, said, "If all the gods and the Gandharvas stand against me, even if the Rakshasas be afraid to render any help to me, still I would not return Sita to Rama. My arrows will fly against Rama as intoxicated bees run towards the vernal flowers. When shall I scorch Rama with arrows discharged from my bow, like meteors burning down an elephant? When shall I eclipse Rama by my presence as the sun robs the planets of their light when it rises in the sky? My irresistible course is like the sea, and I am as strong as the wind, but Rama is ignorant of this. Therefore he ventures to fight against me. Rama has not yet witnessed my arrows like venomous snakes. And so he has ventured to take up arms against

me. Entering the arena of battle I shall play on my bow as upon a stringed musical instrument. The shaft is like the staff of a Vina, twang is its sound, cries of men are its music, Narach and the sound of Tala are like keeping of time. What more shall I speak of my prowess? Even, the chief of the gods, Indra, Varuna¹, Yama² and Kuvera³ cannot vanquish me."

CHAPTER XVI

THE ESPIONAGE

Then Ravana, after calling his counsellors, Suka and Sarana said, "You see, to build a bridge over the sea and for the Vanaras to cross the ocean seem quite incredible. The sea is vast; how is it possible to build a bridge over it? How can we believe it? However, it is necessary to ascertain the number of the enemy troops. Go both of you, in disguise and ascertain the number of the troops and their prowess. Who are the chiefs of the Vanara army, who are the advisers of Rama and Sugriva? Who are in the vanguard and who are really heroic? Go and ascertain the real prowess of Rama and Lakshmana, the nature of their arms, and who is their Commander-in-chief"

Then Suka and Sarana, assuming the forms of two Vanaras, entered the camp of Rama's army. The Vanaras were quite formidable and

1 Neptune. 2 Death and 3 the god of wealth.

countless, so Suka and Sarana could not ascertain their number. At that time, the Vanara troops settled themselves in hills, caves and by the side of fountains. Many were already there, many were coming, many were seated and many were about to take their seats. There was a deafening noise all around. Suka and Sarana watched everything incognito.

In the meantime, Vibhishana detected those two spies in disguise. He at once caught hold of them and produced them before Rama, saying, "These two persons are counsellors of Ravana named Suka and Sarana. They have come in disguise from Lanka and they are spies."

Thereupon Suka and Sarana were greatly frightened, and despairing of their lives they submitted to Rama with folded palms, "O hero! we entered the camp at the command of Ravana."

Then Rama, the benefactor of mankind, smilingly said, "If you have seen all the troops and have ascertained their real nature, if you have succeeded in carrying out the directions of your master, you may safely go. If you have still something to ascertain, you may again go on with your spying, or if you like, Vibhishana himself will show you everything. Do not be fearful about your lives because you have been secured. You are unarmed; besides you are envoys; it is improper to take your lives. Vibhishana! though they are spies and they have come to sow dissensions amongst us, still let them go. Go back and tell the Rakshasa king to display his

prowess with his friends and followers in any manner he likes in the field of battle relying on that prowess he stole my Janaki. I shall tomorrow morning, infest Lanka with my arrows. As Indra hurls the thunder-bolt against the Asuras, so I shall cast my arrows against Ravana."

Then Suka and Sarana, praising Rama, came back to Ravana and addressing him said, "O Rakshasa king! Vibhishana took us before Rama to put us to death, but the righteous Rama set us free. When such four mighty persons like Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana have united together, not to speak of the Vanaras, they are sufficiently strong to uproot Lanka and replace in its original site. Not to speak of the other three persons, considering the image of Rama and the nature of his arms, he alone can reduce Lanka to ruins. The army that is protected by such heroes like Rama and Lakshmana and by the Vanaras like Sugriva, cannot be vanquished even by the gods. O king! they are gladly waiting for battle; you should not quarrel with them; rather you should go and humbly return Janaki to Rama."

CHAPTER XVII

RAVANA'S RESOLVE

Then Ravana, hearing everything from Sarana's lips, said, "You see, even if the gods, Gandharvas, and the Danavas attack me in a

body, if all the people get frightened, I shall not return Sita. You are extremely timid and have been greatly molested by the Vanaras. Therefore you speak like this and that is why restoration of Sita to Rama seems advisable to you. But tell me who can conquer me."

Saying this in anger, Ravana with Suka and Sarana ascended the lofty top of his snow-white palace for reconnoitring the Vanara army. In front of him stood hills and forests and the wide expanse of the sea and its shore covered with the Vanara troops. Seeing that Vanara host, Ravana said to Sarana, "Tell me who are the chiefs amongst that army, who are really warlike, who are forward and who are encouraging them in everything? The counsel of which hero does Sugriva follow? What is their true prowess? Tell me everything in detail."

Sarana said, "O king! that hero who stands facing Lanka and is repeatedly uttering heroic roars, and thereby shaking the forests, hills and Lanka with its walls and gates, is the commander-in-chief of Sugriva; his name is Nila! Who is tall like a mountain peak, who is patrolling swinging his arms to and fro, who is yellow like the filaments of a lotus, who is emitting heroic yells in anger looking towards Lanka, and who is resounding all the quarters by lashing his tail repeatedly on the ground is Angada. Sugriva, king of the Kapis, has installed him as heir-apparent to the throne. He is like Vali and is dear to Sugriva; Varuna fought for Indra; so he will display his valour for Rama. He is challen-

ging you in a fight ; it is for his intelligence that Hanuman succeeded in gathering the whereabouts of Janaki. He has arrived here to attack you with a number of Vanara hosts. In his rear is the heroic Nala, who has built the bridge over the sea. The restive hero of silvery hue that you see at a distance is Sweta. He wishes to destroy Lanka alone with his own troops. Those residents of Chandana¹ who are roaring repeatedly are the followers of Sweta. He is intelligent and famous. Look how he cheers up the army by drawing them in battle array. There is general Kumuda, who rules over the woody Samrochana hill near the Gomati river. He whose long tail is covered with beautiful, long hairs is the heroic Chanda. He himself wants to reduce everything to ruin. He who has long yellow locks and is looking with burning eyes towards Lanka and who always lives in the Vindhya mountain, in the Krishna, the Sahya, and in the Sudarsana hill, is the leader of the army, named Samrambha. Look ! thirty million of formidable Vanaras have followed him for the destruction of Lanka. He who is thoroughly impartial amongst his troops and who is absolutely fearless and who in his anger casts a crooked look at Lanka is the warlike Sarabha. Look ! how he is brandishing his tail ! He resides in the beautiful Saleya mountain. Four million commanders are at his command. That stalwart hero towering over the Vanaras, like Indra amongst the gods, and

1 Perhaps the country abounded in Sandalwood.

whose heroic roars are heard like the sounds of a trumpet is Panasa.¹ His place of residence is the Parijata mountain. Four million of commanders with their troops have gathered round him. He who is covering the sea-beach with his vast host and has filled the air with noise like the second sea, is the stalwart Vinata, tall as the Dardura mountain. This hero drinks from the Vena's stream. He has million troops. There stands heroic Krathana! He is challenging you for a fight. His commanders are strong and warlike, and every one of them has his own troops. He, who in pride of his prowess, does not take anybody into consideration, is Gavaya. He is angrily advancing towards you. Seven million commanders are under him. O Rakshasa king! there is no limit to the number of these commanders. They are highly powerful and formidable. I shall mention to you the commanders and the leaders who are ready to display their utmost valour for Rama. The hero whose tail is covered with fine hair, like the sun with rays and that which occasionally touches the ground is named Hara, millions of captains are ready to pounce upon Lanka at his command with uprooted trees. Those warriors who look like a bank of dark clouds are the formidable Bhallukas. They are innumerable like sands on the shore of the sea; it is difficult to form a correct estimate of their prowess and valour. They live in tracts abounding in hills and rivers

1 In the original occurs a simile—"as a cloud overcasts the sky."

and Jamvuvan is their leader. This hero is quite dreadful to look at. As the god Parjanyan remains surrounded by the clouds, so he is ever surrounded by the Bhallukas. Jamvuvan lives in the Rikshyavana mountain and drinks from the stream of the Narmada. The name of his elder brother is Dhumra; in appearance he is after him, but in prowess he is superior to him. He is gentle and submissive to his superiors and is heroic. This wise leader helped Indra greatly in the war between the Devas and the Asuras and received his desired boon. His troops are countless—climbing the hills, they hurl huge stones as clouds. Those troops have absolutely no fear of death. In cruelty they are like the Rakshasas and the Pisachas, and their bodies are covered with hairs. The warrior who is sometimes bounding from the ground is named Rambha. He who always lives near the god Indra and whose troops are innumerable, is named Sannadan. He is the grandsire of the Vanaras. He touches the peaks by his flanks, and when he stands he is a yojana tall. Amongst the quadrupeds there is none so beautiful as he. Formerly there was a fierce fight between him and Indra, king of the gods, but he came out unbeaten. Look, there stands Kranthan. He was begotten by Agni in the womb of a Gandharva woman to help the Gods in the war between the gods and the demons. In prowess, he is like Indra; he resides in the Kailasa mountain, where Kuvera enjoys blackberries, and which is worshipped by the Kinnaras and he is king of the mountains. He is an attendant of